

CJR

COLUMBIA
JOURNALISM
REVIEW

JANUARY/FEBRUARY
1991♦\$3

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IN BOSTON



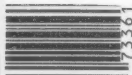
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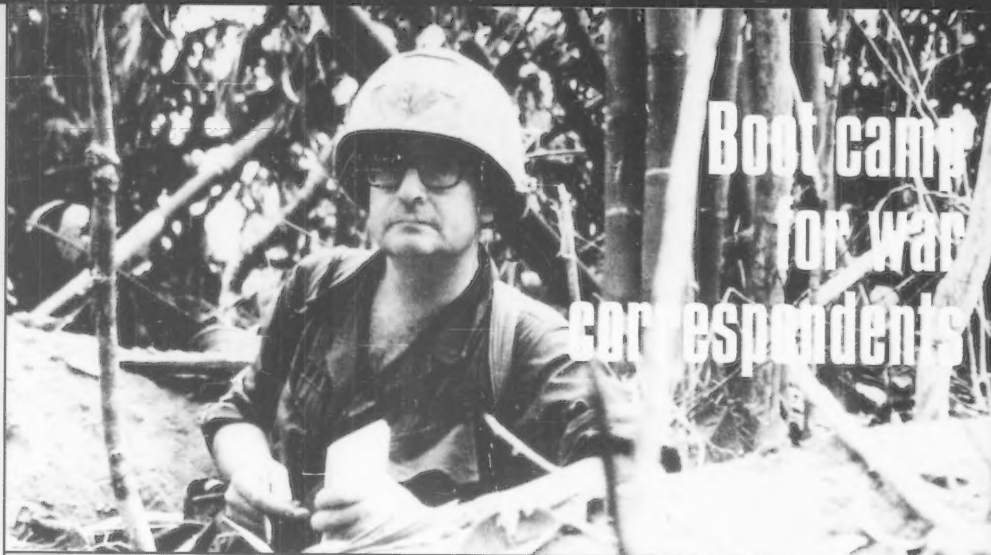
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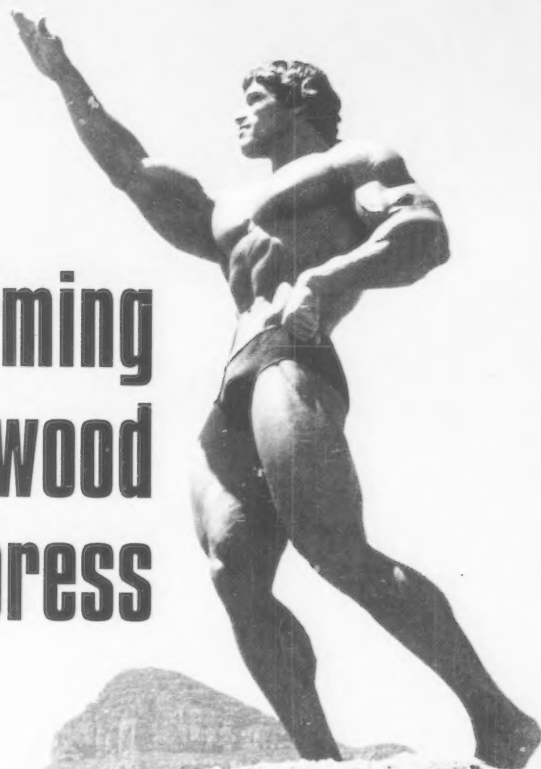


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Boot camp
for war
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Strong-arming
the Hollywood
press

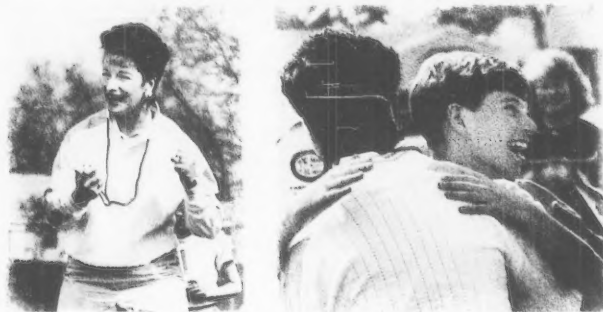


ARE YOU READY FOR
CAMPAIGN '92?
CJR FAX POLL
page 47



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ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ATHLETIC COMPETITIONS ANYWHERE has no losers. It's called Special Olympics. Every year, some 24,500 athletes with mental retardation compete in the



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they even
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a race, they've
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heart.”

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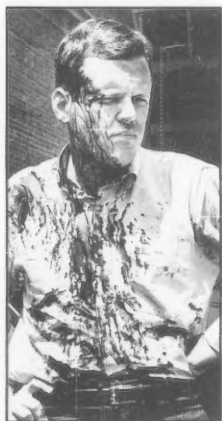
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Are you ready for '92?

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CJR

"TO ASSESS THE PERFORMANCE OF JOURNALISM... TO HELP STIMULATE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT IN THE PROFESSION, AND TO SPEAK OUT FOR WHAT IS RIGHT, FAIR, AND DECENT"

From the founding editorial, 1961

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Agenda for a new year

Journalism is to a large extent making sense of the unexpected. And since CJR is in the business of making sense of journalism, we often find ourselves venturing into the realm of the unpredictable. But as we look toward 1991, there are a few predictions we can make about what will appear in our pages.

First of all, we will be celebrating our thirtieth anniversary and rededicating ourselves to seeking out and encouraging the best in journalism. We think of ourselves as a magazine about early warnings and final analysis, about new ideas and timeless principles, as a forum for the on-going conversations we journalists have with each other about our profession. As we edit CJR, we pride ourselves in taking on the toughest questions a journalist faces — about obligations to sources, about the limits of objectivity, about conflicts of interest. We strive to offer the last word on unfolding stories that become journalism milestones (right now we are working on coverage of the *Daily News* strike, the Janet Malcolm controversies, the metamorphosis of network news), and to highlight events, people, and ideas that deserve more attention than they are getting. And, of course, we will continue to praise — and zap — the work of our colleagues.

Nineteen ninety-one is also the anniversary year of an even more venerable institution — The Bill of Rights — and we will commemorate its first 200 years with a special issue that focuses on the state of health of the First Amendment.

For journalists in particular, the new year marks the beginning of the Campaign '92 story. After the rap the press took last time out, reporters are going to be trying harder than ever to do their jobs well — even if the candidates don't do theirs any better. We intend to make CJR the source of innovative ideas and inspiration to those colleagues who will be slogging through another season of sound-bites, horse-race polls, photo ops, and elusive substance.

We have already begun to elicit blue-sky suggestions from some veterans: How about pushing the networks to invite the candidates into a studio for a one-hour debate all by themselves — without moderators or spin doctors — and broadcast every minute live? What would happen if reporters boycotted photo opportunities? What if, instead of covering the campaign in terms of candidates, reporters were assigned to follow the candidacies from the viewpoint of groups that would be affected by particular policies — the urban poor, the business community, children?

To launch our coverage we are publishing a background piece ("The Candidate and the Reporter: Whose Campaign Is It, Anyway?," page 42), and a look forward: our first "fax poll," page 47, in which we ask for your thinking on past and future presidential campaigns. Answers to such questionnaires will help us focus our assignments as events unfold.

Throughout much of the world democracy appears to be enjoying a renaissance, while here apathy and indifference toward the political process prevail (in 1988, barely half the eligible voters took the trouble to go to the polls). Clearly the press is not the cause of this sorry state of affairs, but journalists are implicated, and the way all of us do our jobs during the next twelve months can play a major role in finding a way out.

SUZANNE BRAUN LEVINE



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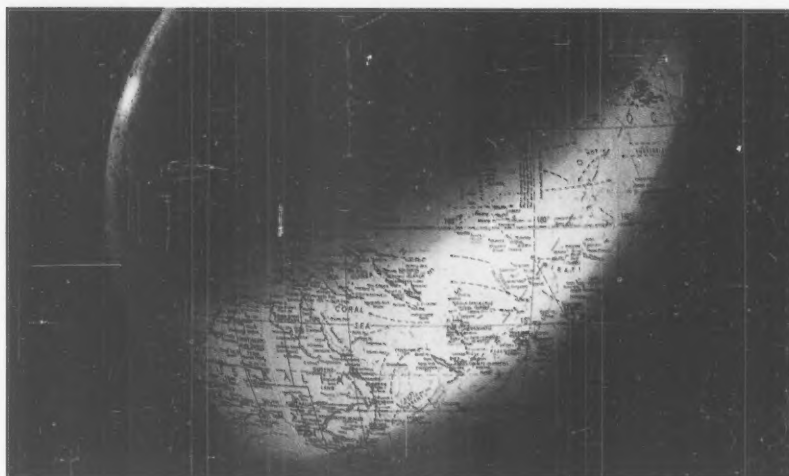
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THE KANDELL CASE

◆
PLAGIARISM AT
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL?

Reporter A sits down with a celebrity, asks a few questions, jots down the answers, then writes an article. Reporter B has the same idea and, after reading A's article, arranges an interview in which the celebrity discusses similar topics and gives similar answers. When B's article is published, it turns out to have many of the same facts and anecdotes as A's. Is this plagiarism?

No, says Jonathan Kandell, a former assistant foreign editor and occasional foreign correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. He says he found himself in the position of reporter B last spring when the *Journal* fired him after similarities between a story he wrote and a book on a related topic were pointed out.

The *Journal* isn't talking, Kandell is suing his old paper for libel, and, meanwhile, the case has animated the continuing discussion about when journalists are obliged to cite others' work and when failure to do so amounts to theft.

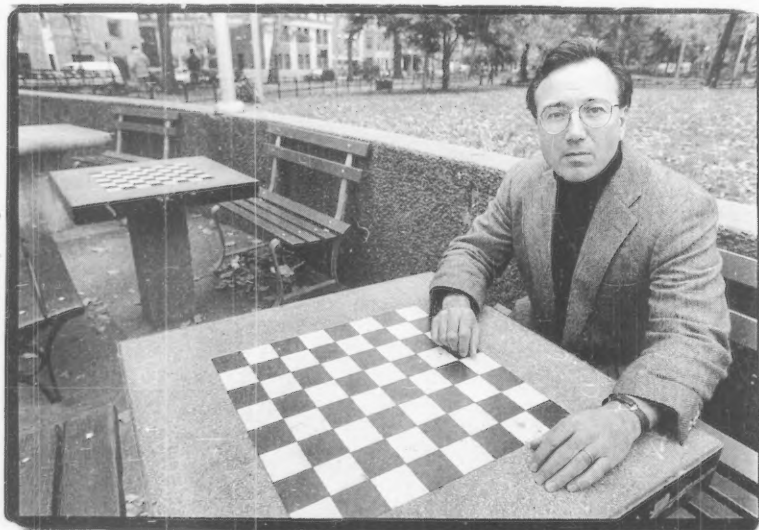
The imbroglio began in late 1989 when Kandell attended a meeting at the New York City-based Council on Foreign Relations featuring three Eastern-bloc economic managers whose unconventional, free-wheeling ways were said to symbolize the new age of *perestroika*. Kandell says he thought the three — Czechoslovak inventor Otto Wichterle, Hungarian venture capitalist Elizabeth Birman, and Soviet factory director Vladimir Kabaidze — might make for an interesting story. After the meeting he spoke to each of them about interviewing them in their home countries. He also exchanged business cards with one John W. Kiser III, an economic consultant who had written a book, *Communist Entrepreneurs*, spotlighting Wichterle, Birman, and Kabaidze, along with a number of other economic innovators who were helping to bring about sweeping changes in Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R.

That was in November. Over the next few weeks, Kandell says, he gathered information and interviewed experts. He also read Kiser's book and discussed it with an editor who, it turned out, knew the author. In January 1990 he departed for Eastern Europe. After interviewing Wichterle, a scientist famous for developing the soft contact lens, for a total of five hours in Prague, Kandell traveled to Budapest, where he spent a comparable amount of time with Birman, and then to Moscow, where he spent about three hours interviewing Kabaidze. He wrote the article in New York, citing the three as talented managers who had triumphed over Soviet-bloc bureaucratic constraints, yet who, ironically, had difficulty imagining what it would be like to operate in a nonbureaucratic environment. The page-one story ran on March 30.

Within days, the *Journal* received a letter from a reader saying he "was astonished at how closely the article followed ... *Communist Entrepreneurs*." In late April, a letter arrived from Kiser himself, saying Kandell's article "was obviously drawn almost entirely" from his book, citing twenty-nine passages as proof. The letter set off shockwaves among editors still smarting from the 1987 blow-up over R. Foster Winans, a *Journal* reporter convicted in a federal court of theft of information for leaking advance intelligence from the paper's influential "Heard on the Street" stock investment column. Kandell defended his actions in a series of meetings with his editors. When deputy managing editor Paul Steiger told him that the *Journal* had decided to run an item the next day in its "Corrections & Amplifications" box stating that Kiser's book had "served in part as the basis" for Kandell's story and that "the article should have mentioned the book and its author," Kandell says he objected.

He was overruled, however. Next, he says, Steiger told him that he had a "gut feeling" that Kandell had not been truthful in saying he had not plagiarized

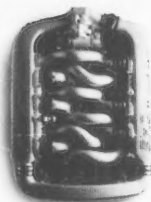
UNDER A CLOUD: After Jonathan Kandell was fired, he sued.



CJR/Harvey Wang



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Kiser's book. Kandell again protested, but a day later he was fired.

"Within twenty-four hours I got calls from newspapers and other publications saying that they had heard from *Journal* sources that I was fired for plagiarism," Kandell says. With his reputation ruined, he says, he decided to sue for libel. The *Journal* refuses to discuss what it says is a confidential personnel matter. Since it never formally accused Kandell of plagiarism, the paper's attorneys contend in court filings, the *Journal* can't be accused of libel for inferences drawn by outsiders concerning the dismissal.

Was it plagiarism, or a case of independent but parallel reporting? The language each author uses is one place to look for evidence. While the information in passages cited by Kiser is similar to Kandell's information, the wording is not. Where Kiser observes, for instance, that Kabaizde's power in the Soviet economy is such that he "can sign a contract anywhere in the world without approvals from other administrative bodies," Kandell writes, somewhat more pungently, that obtaining direct foreign trade rights "enables Mr. Kabaizde to

circumvent the labyrinths of Soviet bureaucracy in signing export or import contracts." Where Kiser writes that Kabaizde "did not make products speci-

**“
Look, how
does a
journalist
find out
about
a story?
By talking to
sources
or reading
about it
”**

fied by the [state's] plan unless they were needed by customers," Kandell says his subject "declined to make products specified by central planners but unwanted by customers." Some passages Kiser points to as parallel with his own turn out to be direct quotes (although not indicated as such in the letter he sent to Kandell's editor); Kandell says he has notes to prove the quotes are genuine.

Indeed, Kandell says an examination of his notes would show that all the data in his article were independently obtained. What role did Kiser's book play in shaping his article? He says that after reading the book he put it aside, prior to departing for

Eastern Europe, and never consulted it again. What happened, he says, is that by following in another writer's footsteps he found himself discussing similar topics with the same trio of media-wise local celebrities, winding up, as reporters sometimes do, with an article containing many of the same anecdotes and much of the same information. Kandell points out that his 2,000-word piece arrives at a very different conclusion than Kiser's book — that, despite their daring ways, these Soviet economic innovators are uncomfortable with the capitalist concept of privatization.

"Look, how does a journalist find out about a story? He finds out about it either by talking to sources or by reading about it. I think the important thing is what you do with a subject, what different direction you take it in, how you develop it with your own legwork," Kandell says, adding that he "did not come across these characters by reading the Kiser book."

Kandell, who won a Maria Moors Cabot Prize in 1977 for his Latin America coverage, wrote for *The New York Times* and the *International Herald Tri-*

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- Trademarks are proper adjectives and should be capitalized and followed by a generic noun or phrase
- Trademarks should not be pluralized
- Trademarks should not be used in possessive form
- Trademarks are never verbs

Following these guidelines will help you to prevent letters of complaint from trademark owners.

TRADEMARK CHECKLIST

This Trademark Checklist provides some of the best known trademarks with their appropriate generic form. It is part of one compiled by U.S. Trademark Association which correctly lists 1,000 trademarks and service marks with their generic terms

There are more than 600,000 trademarks currently registered federally.

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Gatorade thirst quencher
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G.I. Joe dolls
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Handi-Wrap plastic film
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John Deere tractors
Keds athletic footwear
Kitty Litter cat box filler
Kleenex tissues, napkins, disposable diapers
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Nike athletic footwear, clothing
Nikon cameras
No. 5 perfume products by Chanel
NutraSweet sweetener
NYNEX telecommunication services & equipment
Orlon acrylic fiber
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Osterizer blenders
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Pac-Man video games
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bune before coming to the *Journal*. *Times* managing editor Joseph Lelyveld and assistant managing editor Allan M. Siegal, one of Kandell's editors when he covered Latin America for the *Times*, agree that Kandell was "wholly honorable" in the eight years (1971-1979) he spent working with them.

"I just wish the *Journal* would state its case," says Siegal. "I'm sure there are legal reasons why they feel constrained not to do it, but it's awfully difficult for Jon to live under a cloud like this and awfully difficult for the rest of us to see doubts cast on the probity of his journalism."

"I support his version of the events because I can't imagine Jonathan doing the slightest thing wrong," says Joanne Omang, an assistant national editor at *The Washington Post*, who worked with Kandell in the 1970s when both were based in Argentina. The decision of whether or not to cite another journalists' work is a judgment call "in each case," she says, "and I trust Jonathan's judgment."

Daniel Lazare

Lazare is a writer who lives in New York City.

CHRONICLE

FROM FORVERTS TO FORWARD

A FAMOUS JEWISH PAPER
MARCHES ON

A lot of people think that Seth Lipsky, a former member of the editorial board of *The Wall Street Journal*, is meshugga for launching a national Jewish newspaper. The new weekly, *Forward*, was born in New York City last May with the backing of the Forward Association, publisher of the famous ninety-four-year-old Yiddish newspaper *Forverts*.

Reading *Forverts* was a daily obsession for nearly 270,000 socialist-leaning Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants

CJR/Harvey Wang



ROOTS: Editor Seth Lipsky is hoping that Jewish readers' warm feelings for the old *Forverts* will transfer to his new weekly.

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during the paper's peak in the late 1920s. Along with its blend of sensationalism, stirring reporting on social issues, and accomplished literature (Isaac Bashevis Singer got his start there), the paper offered nothing less than instructions on how to behave in America. Partly because it so successfully beat the drums for assimilation, Yiddish has all but disappeared. *Forverts's* weekly readership has dwindled to 15,000, and most of those people are in their seventies.

Having traded away its New York radio station, WEVD-FM, for cash and an AM station, the Forward Association is pouring "several million" into its pin-striped child of America, enough to keep the venture afloat for at least a couple of years, according to editor and president Lipsky. The *Forward* needs 75,000 paying readers — some 30,000 copies are currently being distributed, half for free — and a lot of advertising.

The paper has the sober face of its parent — a baby-blue logo perched above six lined columns of gray, relieved

only by a color photo. Its air of seriousness is reinforced by a solid, big, and bookish arts section, and by lengthy and well-written international stories by correspondents in places like New York and Washington, Paris and Moscow.

When it visits unexplored areas of Jewish life, the *Forward* can be fascinating, as in David Twersky's comprehensive August 3 piece on the efforts of black Georgia Representative John Lewis, a former radical, to build ties with Jewish leaders. The paper seems less valuable when it takes on subjects already widely covered. *Forward* stories about violence against Jews in the Soviet Union, for example, merely seem to add nuances to mainstream coverage.

The package is a far cry from *Forverts's* grandmotherly concern with the everyday life of its readers. It still covers such issues as poverty, Lipsky says, but not from the earlier paper's socialist perspective. One of the *For-*

ward's early editorials warned George Bush not to raise taxes; another frowned on racial and other hiring quotas.

Most Jewish papers — more than 100 around the country — are nourished by local advertising dollars, and, according to Steven Cohn, editor of *Media Industry Newsletter*, these ubiquitous papers are the *Forward's* main competition. "This one I can't see," he says. "There's too much competition out there."

Lipsky thinks that the changes sweeping Eastern Europe and the Middle East are creating a hunger for solid journalism from a Jewish perspective in his target audience — well-to-do middle-aged and older Jews. He also believes his paper will benefit from the warmth that many American Jews feel toward the *Forward's* parent, warmth that could translate into paid subscriptions for a paper that bills itself as "the next generation."

Rob Polner

Polner covers education for the New York Post.

FOLLOW-UP

BAGHDAD IN BRAZIL

"We are not going to neglect Central or South America," George Bush promised shortly after arriving in Santiago, Chile, one of many such comments he made during a six-day junket through Latin America (Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, and Venezuela) early in December. "This," he elaborated, "is *our* hemisphere."

Which must have come as news to most of *our* media: those remarks, as almost everything else having to do with that trip, the most extensive such presidential tour of Latin America since Eisenhower's in 1960, went virtually unreported in the U.S. In its issue of December 17, *Time* limited its reportage of the tour, which had taken up the president's entire week, to two paragraphs in a piece about the brief December military uprising in Argentina. Still, that was better than *Newsweek*, which didn't once mention the trip in *any* of its reporting. The major daily papers, did somewhat better; each managed to include two or three articles during the week, outlining one or another of the monumental problems facing the region Bush was streaking through: crippling debt, polarized wealth, staggering inflation, tense civil-military relations, the legacy of human rights violations, the equivocal results of various shock economic therapies, and so forth. The evening newscasts on the three major networks provided at most one overview segment and perhaps one in-depth piece on one or another of the countries on the president's itinerary. (Neither *Nightline* nor *MacNeill/Lehrer* found time for any South American segments.) Otherwise, for the most part, coverage followed along lines typified by Peter Jennings in his December 5 broadcast: "President Bush was in Argentina today, the only South American country that has contributed to the military operation in the Persian Gulf..." Much was made, on two networks, of an awkward moment on the receiving line in Buenos Aires when Bush had to shake hands with the Iraqi ambassador. Nothing was made, the next day in Santiago, of

Bush's extended handshake with General Pinochet, a moment that provoked headlines all over Latin America.

Each morning that week, newspaper readers could open to a front page picture of Bush pounding home some new point about Saddam Hussein, flanked by some new incidentally-identified-if-only-in-passing (and entirely interchangeable) Latin American head of state. In this manner, Collor and Menem and Aylwin in turn were allowed to stand in as substitutes for the role usually reserved for this year's cerebral palsy poster child at the latest Oval Office photo-op.

The same December 17 issue of *Time* featured a fine piece on network news headlined "More Programs, Less News," detailing the latest round of budget cuts and bureau closings to have afflicted television news organizations. "With fewer reporters and crews overseas," *Time* explained, "the networks are depending increasingly on foreign satellite services — except, of course, when President Bush comes calling." Except, of course, in the case of South America: it's hard to imagine a week-long presidential visit anywhere else in the world — Europe? India? Africa? Antarctica? Kansas? — where coverage would have been so anemic.

As I pointed out in "The Media's One and Only Freedom Story" (CJR, March/April 1990), American news media, transfixed by developments in Eastern Europe, completely missed the simultaneous and parallel upwelling of democracy represented by the Brazilian and Chilean presidential elections. Obviously this basically racist bias persists. However, over the past year the problem has taken on greater urgency. It's becoming increasingly clear that Germany, and not the United States, will play the major role in the development of Eastern Europe, just as Japan will play the leading role in the development of Asia. The economic fate of the United States will in all likelihood be tied to the fate of Latin America. Bush was in part acknowledging as much with his trip. U.S. media have yet to wake up, as it were, and smell the coffee.

Lawrence Weschler

Weschler is a staff writer for The New Yorker.

SECEDING FROM THE UNION

WHY I QUIT

This begins the eighth month of the reign of Danny Benvenuti at The Sacramento Union. If anyone had told me eight months ago this place could go down the drain as quickly as it has, I wouldn't have believed it.

I wrote the above in a letter to a friend on August 3, two months before I found another job and left *The Sacramento Union*, where I had worked for two years as a news reporter. In that span I had seen a bad situation go to worse and then to incredible. By the time I left the paper on October 5, I had seen the news tampered with at even the most basic of levels to reflect the owners' and editors' religious and political biases.

CHRONICLE

The *Union*, which can count Mark Twain among its contributors, has been a conservative paper for as long as anyone in the state capital can remember. By 1988, when I joined it, the paper was owned by conservative multimillionaire Richard Mellon Scaife (see "Citizen Scaife," *CJR*, July/August 1981). Scaife's years were marked by bitterness and labor strife, but the out-of-town owner kept his fingers out of the news, and employees now look back on his time with nostalgia.

When two local real estate developers, Daniel Benvenuti, Jr., and David Kassis, bought the 70,000-plus circulation paper in late 1989, they vowed to keep a conservative voice publishing in Sacramento to compete against the predominant *Sacramento Bee*, circulation 261,000. In frequent strolls through the newsroom, Benvenuti also vowed not to impose his own views on the newsroom. Although we knew he attended a church that espouses fundamentalist Christianity, the idea of religion influencing the news seemed too far-fetched to even bring up.



CJR/David Bauman/The Press-Enterprise, Riverside, California

KATHLEEN SALAMON:

"I had seen a bad situation go to worse and then to incredible."

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The association aims to ensure that the collective voices of black schools, their students, and their graduates will be heard in journalism education and in the media professions.

And it aims to destroy the myth that keeps black professionals out of America's media.

The Gannett Foundation, devoted to fostering First Amendment freedoms, hails the establishment of this association as a long-overdue step toward stronger and more racially representative media.



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Lona Cobb
West Virginia State College



Marrice Odine
Winston-Salem State Univ.



Elizabeth Barron
Xavier Univ.

Pictured are
representatives of the
Association of Black
College Journalism
and Mass Commu-
nication Programs.

Gannett Foundation

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Encroachments on the newsroom were gradual at first. In January 1990, Benvenuti personally pulled a front-page photo that showed a large turnout for a pro-abortion rally and replaced it with a close-up of only three or four demonstrators. (He later expressed his regrets to then editor James Vesely for doing so.) In the spring, the *Union's* film critic was told not to write a full-length review of *Longtime Companion*, a film about AIDS.

Such meddling, however, came to seem trivial by comparison after Vesely resigned and Joseph Farah came on board in July. Farah, thirty-six, had been executive editor at Glendale Newspapers, a group of dailies and weeklies in southern California, and before that the executive news editor of the now-defunct *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*.

One of the first things Farah did was to issue memos prohibiting reporters from using the terms "gay," "assault rifles," and "women's health center." These were to be replaced with "homosexual," "semi-automatic rifles," and "abortion clinics." He edited a story by one of the paper's state bureau reporters

so that the National Organization for Women was defined as a "radical feminist group" and former Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., was

“Across the top of the letter Farah had written, ‘This guy will work cheap’”

described as having "consistently struck down all legal protections of the unborn."

Farah also hired two people who had most recently worked at the state Assembly Republican Caucus — city editor Mike Pottage and columnist Roger Canfield. It was Canfield's treatment in his column of homosexuals and people afflicted with AIDS that, among other things, caused Sacramento Mayor Anne Rudin to announce she was dropping her subscription to the *Union* for what she called "hate-mongering."

Mary Owen, who was hired as the *Union's* religion writer last May, resigned on September 25 after several conflicts with Farah. "If I didn't find a

story the way he wanted," she says, "I was told he wouldn't give it time or space. He was telling anybody who disagreed with him that they were bad reporters."

One assignment she received from Farah was to do a piece on values in the schools. Farah, she says, wanted conflict in the story. "He told me that religion was the basis of all morals, so the schools were in trouble because of lack of Christian influence. But I believe you don't have to be religious to have a moral structure. The bottom line is that I saw great things happening in the schools, but he didn't want to hear about that."

Making sure the staff has the "right" political thinking seems to be a priority with Farah. In a letter from a job applicant for a reporter's position that was left on top of the city editor's desk over the weekend (and was copied and distributed around the newsroom), it became clear that the applicant had talked with Farah about abortion, homosexuality, and Christianity. "I mentioned to you that I've resolved the homophobia and personal hatred toward homosexuals that I

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once had," wrote the applicant, who in the end was not hired. "I don't hate them as individuals, but I believe they are an evil influence in our society and need to be opposed and their propaganda barrage combated by truthful reporting.... I trust God for protection and if He chooses not to protect me in His own purposes, then I'm ready to suffer for it."

Across the top of this letter Farah had written: "This guy will work cheap."

At city editor Pottage's first staff meeting with reporters, questions were raised about seemingly biased story assignments. Pottage responded that the paper had a bias and that if there was ever a weekend when both Operation Rescue and ACT UP were holding demonstrations and only one reporter was available, "You know which one we'll cover. We'll cover the Operation Rescue story."

And so it went. A piece on a large

"life chain" anti-abortion demonstration was headed 16,600 STAND PROUD AGAINST ABORTION. Other reporters found that stories neutral or complimentary to politicians or policies Pottage disagreed with were either scratched or thoroughly rewritten.

One such story I obtained out of the files originally read:

A countywide smog-clearing law is being written to put two out of every five commuters in buses and car pools. The law would mandate that businesses with 40 or more workers have 40 percent of them get to and from their jobs other than by driving alone in their automobiles.

The edited version, which ran on the front page of the paper, read:

The Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District wants to dictate how



WHY THE LIBERAL PRESS IS OUT TO GET US

The Sacramento Union is a struggling morning newspaper that has been losing money and circulation for the last twenty years. So why is it suddenly attracting the attention of *The Washington Post*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and a host of other big guns in the liberal media? What high crimes against journalistic tradition is the paper violating?

Under new ownership and management, the paper is undergoing profound changes. For one thing, it is committed to running like a business rather than a subsidy operation. For another, it recently became one of only two dailies in the country to reject advertising for NC-17 movies, challenging the media industry to reexamine its position on this issue.

Yes, *The Sacramento Union* stands for certain principles and we passionately support them in our editorials, columns, and cartoons. We take strong positions, for instance, against abortion on demand, excessive government spending, and special rights based on sexual proclivities. We also strongly support the family, the free enterprise system, and the toughest penalties for violent criminals.

It is because of these controversial stands that we have been victimized by the reportorial hatchet jobs of some colleagues. It is simply untrue, as some of these critics charge, that our strong point of view has destroyed the standards of balance and fairness in our news columns. Our critics have focused on a handful of examples of alleged bias, most of which pale by comparison with the excesses of subjectivity in the pages of our liberal counterparts and competitors.

In fact, we take a strong stand against biased news coverage and see it as a major problem infecting the media. As many surveys have shown, the newspaper industry is dominated by liberals. We are merely trying to offer a professional, balanced, feisty alternative. Our media colleagues say they are committed to free expression, pluralism, and dissent. Why, then, is there so much contempt and intolerance for one maverick conservative paper?

Joseph Farah

Farah is editor of *The Sacramento Union*.

International Fellowship

Eisenhower Exchange Fellowships announces a competition for citizens of the U.S.A. to travel to Argentina during Fall 1991 on a professional exchange program. Four week program includes travel throughout the country for research/inquiry purposes. Open to mid-career professionals with demonstrated leadership and significant contributions to their field. Benefits include all travel costs and living allowance for Fellow and spouse. Application forms sent upon written request. Deadline for submission of completed application is January 31.

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area residents travel to work. The planned ordinance would include penalties for non-conformists.... New rules will be drafted to force at least two of every five commuters to abandon their cars and either take the bus, carpool or ride rapid transit.

I've counted sixteen editorial employees who have left the paper since July, a significant turnover on a paper with a full-time editorial staff of about sixty-five. Many quit on ethical grounds. "The owner of this paper has manipulated the editorial personnel in an effort to mold a staff that will follow his religious and political ideals," reporter Rocky Rushing wrote in his letter of resignation. "A once hard-working gung-ho staff has been reduced to a group of malcontents."

One member of that unhappy group still with the *Union* told me recently, "I'm embarrassed to work for a paper that Mark Twain wouldn't last two weeks on. His bust is in the lobby, but he couldn't even get hired here."

Kathleen Salamon

Salamon is a reporter at The Press-Enterprise in Riverside, California.

'SEDITION' IN KENYA

While *The Nairobi Law Monthly* sounds like the name of an esoteric journal, of interest only to a handful of African lawyers, it has developed into Kenya's liveliest political publication. Launched in 1987 by editor-in-chief Gitobu Imanyara, its readership has grown dramatically, to nearly 15,000. And since three other publications on social and political issues were banned in 1988 and 1989, the *Law Monthly* has emerged as one of the nation's few surviving critics of Kenya's drift to dictatorship.

The April/May issue, devoted to "The Historic Debate: Law, Democracy & Multiparty Politics in Kenya," is an example. Along with incisive critiques of single-party domination by Kenya's ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU), the issue stung President Daniel arap Moi by quoting statements

he made when he was an opposition politician on the need for a two-party system. It also featured a reprint from an interview with current Vice-President George Saitoti.

Despite the effort to present both government and opposition views, the issue led to Imanyara's indictment for sedition, a charge that could put him in prison for up to seven years. The indictment came in July, after Imanyara had already been held without charge for three weeks in an unlit cell in a maximum security prison. Pending trial, he began reprinting the "seditious" April/May issue. Then, in September, the attorney general of Kenya banned the *Law Monthly*, making the mere possession of a copy of the magazine, even an old one, a criminal offense.

Imanyara requested that Kenya's high court lift the ban pending a full hearing, and a judge granted the request. That victory inspired a new round of repression, however, including the police seizure of the case file from the court, an investigation into how the case came to be assigned to the judge who lifted the order, and the arrest and trial of the *Law*

An irresistible, often funny, behind-the-scenes look at the most popular type of magazine feature writing—portrait journalism.



Susan Scott

Bernard Malamud

PORTRAITS IN PRINT

Helen Benedict, a master of the genre, has collected for *PORTRAITS IN PRINT* nine of her best profiles of well-known authors and other celebrities.

Following each profile you'll find commentaries on the trickier issues of how much confidence to betray, how personal to get, what to leave out, and the power journalists have over a profile subject.

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Kenyan editor Gitobu Imanyara

Monthly's lawyer in what Imanyara's supporters see as an act of political reprisal. The attorney general, meanwhile, has moved to reinstate the ban.

Imanyara issued a statement about the situation: "Freedom of conscience, of expression, and therefore of the press are central to a democratic society. And when any of them is clamped, our humanity is that much restricted and democracy destroyed. On that ideal *The Nairobi Law Monthly* was founded. On that ideal it has grown." As of December, he was at work on the next issue.

Richard Dicker

Dicker is a lawyer for *Africa Watch*.

CHRONICLE

RESOURCES

HOW TO FIND AFRICA

Few journalists would deny that Africa gets short shrift in the newsrooms of the United States. Most of them blame a combination of factors, including a lack of interest on the part of news executives and a paucity of information and sources this side of the Atlantic. But that second excuse is more apparent than real; the information and sources are out there.

True, only a handful of magazines and broadcasts on Africa are produced in the United States. They include *Africa News*, a biweekly published in Durham, North Carolina, by the Africa News Service (919-286-0747); *Africa Report*, published bimonthly in New York by the

African-American Institute (212-949-5666, ext. 728); and *South Africa Now*, a TV program that runs on PBS stations across the country.

Billed as the only source of "breaking news from every part of Africa," *Africa News* was established in 1973 to replace "widespread myths and stereotypes about Africa with accurate, up-to-date information." Its stories are thoroughly researched, timely, and well written; its staff also operates a research service and library.

Africa Report, meanwhile, carries solid magazine-length interviews, articles, and commentary on political and economic developments in Africa and their implications for U.S. policy. As at *Africa News*, the staff maintains a research facility, the Africa Policy Information Center, which clips over 200 U.S., European, and African news sources and maintains files dating from 1974 on every African country, as well as on specific subjects.

South Africa Now, U.S. television's sole news program on southern Africa, reports mainly on developments in South Africa but also covers the "frontline"

FELLOWSHIPS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

"The greatest year of my life..."



That's the way Carlos Ramos, the Mexico City correspondent of *La Opinion*, described his fellowship at the USC Center for International Journalism.

Carlos is from El Salvador. He is both a lawyer and a journalist. *La Opinion*, the largest Spanish language newspaper in the United States, hired him upon completion of his fellowship. Many other U.S. and Latin American journalists who have been USC Fellows like Ramos share his view of the year-long program.

If you want to apply for admission to next September's program and have a minimum of four years of experience as a bonafide journalist, you should do so immediately.

The deadline is March 1.

Fellowships cover full tuition and a generous living stipend.

The Center for International Journalism offers a vigorous intellectual and professional opportunity to journalists interested in foreign affairs. Knowledge of Spanish will be required by the time we depart for Mexico.

As a fellow, you can earn either a Master's Degree or Certificate in International Journalism. You will study for eight months at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and three months at El Colegio de Mexico in Mexico City, where you will broaden your understanding of Mexico and other Latin American nations. Every year we investigate the immigration problem on the California-Mexico bor-

der, visit Washington D.C. and Cuba.

In Mexico, you will study, travel and file stories regularly for your news organizations.

Some recent Fellows have come from the Associated Press, CBS News, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Miami Herald, Orange County Register, Orlando Sentinel, Philadelphia Inquirer, St. Louis Post Dispatch, St. Petersburg Times, San Diego Union and Seattle Post Intelligencer.

For more information, contact:

Murray Fromson, Director
University of Southern California
Center for International Journalism
GFS 326A
Los Angeles, CA 90089-1695
Tel. (213) 740-8277 or 740-3927

states — Namibia, Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe (see page 32).

Magazines and newsletters

These are the most familiar sources for U.S. journalists, but there are several others, including magazines published in Europe and Africa, many of them available in the U.S. Among the most authoritative are the BBC's *Focus on Africa*, and *New African* and *African Business*, also published in London. For "influential gossip and good rumor," Africanists recommend *Africa Confidential*, published by former British Secret Service officials.

Adotei Akwei, research director for the anti-apartheid American Committee on Africa (212-962-1210), which publishes material on South Africa and maintains comprehensive files on southern Africa, recommends three publications that cover that region. These are *Facts and Reports*, a compilation of European and African press clippings on Southern Africa produced in Amsterdam by the Holland Committee on South Africa; *Southern Africa Report*, pro-

duced five times a year by the Toronto Committee for the Liberation of Southern Africa; and *Southscan*, a British weekly newsletter on southern Africa and the frontline states. *Southscan* fields its own reporters in the region, and its detailed coverage is considered objective and reliable.

Lobbying groups

Lobbying groups that can be tapped for information include TransAfrica (202-547-2550) and the Washington Office on Africa (202-546-7961). Think tanks also provide a wealth of information. They include the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (202-862-7900) and the African Studies Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (202-887-0200), which publishes *Africa Notes*, "a briefing paper series [for] decision makers and analysts with Africa-related responsibilities."

Journals

Among journals, a widely recommended source for serious researchers is *Issue*,

published by the African Studies Association (404-329-6410), based at Emory University in Atlanta. The twice-yearly "multidisciplinary magazine" concentrates on current policy issues. Other journals printed in the United States include the monthly *African Commentary*, a recently launched "journal of people of African descent" published in Amherst, Massachusetts (413-549-1934), and *Africa Today*, a quarterly published by the School of International Studies at the University of Denver.

Government sources

Then there is the federal government. The House Subcommittee on Africa (202-226-7807), which has a reputation for activism and opposition to administration policy, holds regular hearings on various African issues, and publishes the testimony. The more conservative Senate Foreign Relations Committee has also held hearings on African issues. The State Department's Bureau of African Affairs (202-647-2446) publishes *AF Press Clips*, a biweekly compilation of Africa-related stories culled from six U.S. newspapers. For a hearty diet of raw information there is the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), which reprints and translates news and information from foreign radio and television broadcasts, news agency transmissions, newspapers, books, and periodicals. FBIS reports are published five days a week; subscriptions are expensive, but the reports can be found in designated libraries.

Human rights groups

International human rights monitoring organizations are increasingly focusing on Africa and are another source of reliable information. Among these are Africa Watch, based in New York, Washington, and London, which monitors human rights practices in sub-Saharan Africa, and Middle East Watch, a sister organization that monitors North African countries. Amnesty International also tracks Africa. Journalists can call Amnesty (212-807-8400) for a publications list, material on particular countries, and for help in locating experts on each country.

Miriam Lacob

Lacob, who was raised in Johannesburg, is a free-lance journalist in New York.

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CAPITAL LETTER

Scoop REDUX: THE PRESS GOES TO BOOT CAMP

BY WILLIAM BOOT

Boot of the *Beast* is back: *Scoop*, Evelyn Waugh's 1937 send-up of war correspondents, has finally come to the screen (*Masterpiece Theatre*, December 30), with William Boot — the name has a faintly familiar ring — as the central character. Callow Britisher Michael Maloney is well-cast as the retiring wildlife columnist Boot; Donald Pleasence is even better as the idiotic Lord Copper, publisher of the London *Daily Beast*, who, due to a case of mistaken identity, dispatches Boot to cover a civil war in Ishmaelia, East Africa. The London Weekend Television production is disappointing in some respects (far too much time, for instance, is devoted to Boot's sex life, which, sadly, is anything but fascinating). But the film, true to the book, is at its funniest when portraying the war correspondents who gather in Ishmaelia as anxiety-plagued victims of circumstance: they are so afraid of being scooped that they sleep in the same room to keep their eyes on each other; so pressured by editors for results (CABLE FULLIER OFTENER PROMPTLIER) that they file dramatic, color-packed copy even though they are barred from the war front; so easy to manipulate that they are tricked by the government into dashing off for a supposed rebel

William Boot is the pen name of Christopher Hanson, a reporter based in Washington.

stronghold, Laku, which does not exist and is on the map by mistake.

Boot, who stays behind, scores a major scoop on a coup d'état, but only by the sheerest accident. Nevertheless, he becomes a hero. And Boot of the *Beast* becomes a household name in Britain.

One thing that has long intrigued me, given the savagery of Waugh's pen, is how popular the book is with many actual war correspondents — a phenomenon all the more topical in that wars and rumors of wars are on the wind from Monrovia to Baghdad. Fans of *Scoop* (in contrast to the other camp of foreign correspondents, who glorify war; more about them in a moment) are all for puncturing the myth of the intrepid, dashing, super-competent war reporter — the myth purveyed by such films as Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent*. In reality, says veteran war reporter Edward Behr, "notebooks are lost, tape recorders jam, taxis break down in remote places, and on the way to the revolution noisy children throw up in crowded planes. It's a world of Woody Allen rather than Joel

can recall *Scoop*, then they are considered valid."

Broder continues: "I know very few foreign correspondents who don't love that book, because in a humorous, satirical way it captures ... the pressures that correspondents experience, particularly in third-world countries. It's a treacherous environment and it produces scenes of great craziness."

For instance, in 1983, under pressure to come up with a story on recent developments in the Lebanese war, Broder set off through Israeli lines, eventually passing a series of checkpoints guarded by various militias. At one such checkpoint, Druse gunmen went through his gear, which, as always, included a spherical black rubber drain stopper on a chain for filling plugless bathtubs in cheap hotels. Unfortunately, the gunmen mistook the stopper for a hand grenade. Backing away, they ordered him to ignite it with a lighter. Eventually, when they smelled the burning rubber, they shrugged and waved him through.

Not all *Scoop*-like experiences need be menacing, but they must be absurd enough to puncture the foreign correspondent myth. Take the case of a *Washington Times* reporter dispatched to cover a third-world conflict several years ago. Just as Lord Copper gave Boot some parting advice for Ishmaelia ("Be prepared ... a coil of rope or a sheet of tin may save your life in the wilds"), *Washington Times* editor Arnaud de Borchgrave offered the following parting counsel, according to the reporter: "When interviewing presidents, wear a suit; when you go out with the guerrillas, wear jungle fatigues." The reporter sought to comply with this matching attire rule only to discover, upon going out with his first band of guerrillas, that they wore civilian shirts and blue jeans.

Or take the case of the late magazine photographer Margaret Bourke-White. In his memoir *Anyone Here Been Raped and Speaks English?* (a question actually asked of refugees in the Congo by a



"It's a world of Woody Allen rather than Joel McCrea."

McCrea." Behr who covered wars from the Congo to Vietnam for *Time*, the BBC, and *Newsweek*, insists that *Scoop* is "the best book ever written about the press" and has handed out numerous copies to friends and associates.

"Often," adds *San Francisco Examiner* correspondent Jonathan Broder, who has covered three Middle East wars, "when foreign correspondents tell a story, they say, 'This was a situation right out of *Scoop*.' *Scoop* has sort of become the standard against which all experiences are judged. If experiences

BBC reporter), Behr recounts how Bourke-White "made an Indian refugee family, at partition-time in 1947, bury and rebury its dead several times before extracting sufficient pathos from the scene."

Of course, the most dangerous situations make the best barroom stories and magazine features — provided that they strike the appropriate "Vaugh is Hell" tone. Three quick examples:

■ November 1967. Behr, working for *Newsweek* in Saigon, hears that a U.S. battalion has been ambushed by North Vietnamese on Hill 875 near the Cambodian frontier. With great difficulty, he reaches the hill area. Reporters are not allowed up, but he is given the go-ahead by a non-com, who explains, "I read [*Newsweek*] every week." Behr advances up the hill, past charred earth and body parts as Americans are picked off all around him. He takes refuge in a hole, with two corpses, and peeks at the battle. The Americans capture the hill. Now, under intense pressure to file for that week's edition, Behr scrambles madly to get back to Saigon in time for the regular deadline. He makes it. With relief, he



War correspondent Edward Behr on the job in Vietnam, 1967

reaches for the phone and calls his New York office. "There's no one here," says the *Newsweek* operator. "Don't you know it's Thanksgiving Day?"

■ Winter 1983. On an excursion to seek the first interviews with officers who had just defected from the Lebanese army, reporters William Barrett of the *Dallas Times Herald* and David Zucchino of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* are being driven by an inattentive cabbie, who zooms through a lightly manned Druse

checkpoint without even noticing. In *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, New York *Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman recounts what happened next: a car full of heavily armed, bearded Druze militia comes speeding after the taxi and cuts it off. The gunmen storm out and surround the taxi, brandishing their AK-47s. They examine the reporters' press credentials, then confer among themselves at length. A gunman asks, "Which of you is from Dallas?" Barrett confesses, whereupon the bearded militiaman, with a murderous expression, points his assault rifle at Barrett. "Who shot J.R.?" the gunman demands. The militiamen then break into raucous laughter and welcome the reporters to town.

■ September 1990. Denis Johnson, a novelist from Idaho on assignment for *Esquire* (see December 1990 issue),

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arrives in Liberia on a long-delayed relief ship that crashes into the pier. In Monrovia, an atmosphere of "happy horror" prevails, as rebels wearing looted wedding gowns and shower caps vie for control of what is left of the capital with another faction, this one wearing women's hairpieces looted from wig shops. Anyone suspected of belonging to the late deposed President Samuel Doe's tribe or army is being shot or beheaded and in the chaos and starvation "even the Lebanese were getting out, hoping to get back to Beirut."

A group of Western correspondents makes its way through the gunfire to rebel chief Field Marshal Prince Johnson's headquarters, where they find him, with acoustic guitar and backup singers, performing "Rivers of Babylon," a Creole-reggae rendition of the 137th Psalm. A press conference ensues, in which Johnson discloses: "I cut off [Doe's] ears and made him eat them" — and that he has it all on videotape. He then shows the journalists the horrific tape, but the electric power fails before the interrogation-mutilation is complete, just after the ears are severed. When the power is restored, the rebels refuse to restart the tape. Their rationale? It might be bad for Prince Johnson's *public image*! The journalists argue that Johnson's image will in fact suffer if the rest of the video is *not* shown. Evidently persuaded, the rebels restart the tape. Score one for the Western news media.

Two elements make each of these a good war story in the Waugh tradition. First, the juxtaposition of the terrifying and the ridiculous. As Broder puts it, "Horror plus humor equals absurdity, and then you're getting a *Scoop*-like situation." Second, the purpose of the story — to describe a situation and evoke a mood, not aggrandize the image of the story-teller.

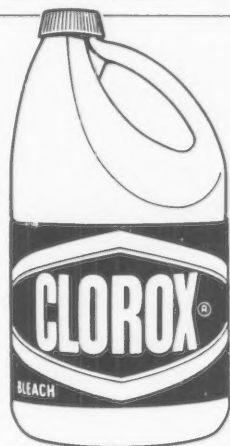
"If it's pure blood and guts and 'I watched in horror,' then it can get kind of boring," says Jonathan Broder, and he's right. As an example (mine not Broder's), take the following, which appeared in a two-part *San Francisco Examiner* article, "Living Dangerously: A Foreign Correspondent's Life on the Front Lines" (Sunday magazine, July 1 and July 8) by the paper's war correspondent, Phil Bronstein:

"I wheeled my jeep at top speed off

San Carlos Boulevard [in San Salvador].... The whole city, it seemed, had burst alive in a symphony of shooting.... We were trolling for action.... The side road was a pitch-dark maw of menace.... We knew combat would be fierce here.... Suddenly, a massive fire fight erupted all around us.... Instantly, we dived out of the jeep and crawled underneath it. A familiar drill.... I yelled, 'Let's get out of here!.... I jammed the jeep into reverse and rocketed, pedal-to-the-floor, backwards.... We felt a better-

than-heroin high, the unparalleled joy of having passed through mortal peril unscathed...."

Bronstein, who has caused conflicts in Central America and the Philippines, has produced a significant document. It records for posterity many of the stereotypical features of the barroom war story favored by those correspondents who, as Nora Ephron put it in 1973 (writing of that year's Arab-Israeli war), "are stuck in the Hemingway bag ... and tend to romanticize war just as he did.... War is



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not hell. It is fun." Broder (again without reference to Bronstein) says there is a large category of foreign correspondents — the "soldier-manqué" crowd — many of whom have a penchant for cloaking themselves in the macho image of "the guy traipsing through the jungle like a living Camel Filter ad." (Reporters in this category would presumably include the legendary correspondent of the Columbus, Georgia, *Inquirer* who, according to Ward Just, "left Vietnam with three notches in his belt"; a wire service veteran of El Salvador, who I

once heard declare portentously to a wide-eyed young woman, "Some stories are worth dying for"; and the late Bob Reuben of Reuters, who went out on the town in his war correspondent uniform of highly polished combat boots and an immaculate military tunic, in 1947 — two years after his war had ended.)

At over 13,000 words, Bronstein's article (including a cover photograph and ten additional photos of Bronstein in a helicopter, a tent, and various jungle settings, wearing army shirts, bandannas, and colorful Filipino attire) must be the

definitive compilation of clichés of the soldier-manqué stripe, so I shall quote from it at length. The subheads are mine:

The Nerds I Left Behind Me: "None of us has to be in these places. We could be back home, eating fat, rich food, covering school board meetings or nonlethal savings and loan disasters, going to first-run movies in theaters where soldiers don't have to check under seats for bombs...."

Magnificent Misfits: "I questioned aloud the sanity of our profession, why we do what we do.... Are we nuts?...."

"Gene is stupendously well-read and has extensive religious training. I figured he was qualified to answer. 'None of us,' he said with a smile, 'was ever normal in our own countries.'"

Flashbacks from Hell: "The emotional strain adds up, and it gets you, sometimes at odd moments.... Walking with my mother in the hills behind her Ojai Valley home, I dived to the ground underneath a bush when a single-engine plane appeared unexpectedly, close and lowflying. She just looked at me and said nothing...."

These Are Desperate Men and They Will Stop at Nothing: "The [colonel] whispered to me that 'we only need to kill 30,000 people and we know who they are'.... Briefly his attention was distracted by a fly. He turned to his assistant, his eyes gone a cold, steely grey. 'Kill it!' he commanded.... His favorite companion, a giant Rottweiler, stood at attention nearby. The dog, the colonel loved to reminisce, had killed his pet monkey and was trained to tear the throat out of any living thing."

Whew!

Within the minds of most of the war correspondents I have talked to, Evelyn Waugh appears to be at war with Hemingway. Certain *Scoop* fans indulge in the odd self-glorifying anecdote, and even Bronstein attempts, not very effectively, to add some *Scoop*-like touches to his own article. In Bronstein's case, however, Hemingway overwhelmingly carries the day.

Now a new generation of would-be war correspondents is poised to join American troops in the Middle East. One can only pray for peace and hope that Waugh wins the battle for their minds before the real fighting starts, if start it must. ♦

THEY PULLED NO PUNCHES

Ben Bagdikian...
KERA-TV, Dallas...
Stuart Taylor Jr...
"Illusions of News"...

Ben Bagdikian, the dean of American news media critics, won the 1990 Lowell Mellett Award for Improving Journalism through Critical Evaluation for an essay in *The Progressive* on the intrusion of commercial interests in the coverage of the news—an article, the judges said, that "symbolizes his sustained contributions to the improvement of journalism through critical evaluation."

And the judges, Peter Herford, Ray Jenkins and Alex Jones, also honored with special Mellett citations the public TV station KERA; the "Illusions of News" program in the Bill Moyers series, "The Public Mind"; and Stuart Taylor Jr. of *The American Lawyer*. All of them published or broadcast distinguished, constructive criticism of the news media—that's what the Mellett Award and its \$1,000 prize are all about.

The next Mellett Award will be for work done, completed or continuing in 1990. The deadline for entries is March 1, 1991. For additional information about the award and the entry rules, please write.

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DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **LAUREL** to *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and staff writers Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele, for a measured look (November 4) at the nation's new federal budget act, hailed for its fairness in raising the taxes of the rich. Unlike the 282 members of Congress who voted for its passage, and the countless members of the press who reported on its provisions, Barlett and Steele actually read the 1,000-plus-page document, compared it with the Tax Reform Act of 1986, and came up with a deflating bottom line: "In what may prove to be one of the great all-time tax-writing sleights-of-hand," their audit revealed, the October 27 legislation imposes "very real" increases on middle class Americans" and very "illusory" ones (indeed, in the long run, cuts) for the wealthiest few at the top; what's more, they concluded, the "deficit-reduction" package won't come even close to generating the \$10.8 billion in new revenues publicly claimed by its supporters. As the *Inky's* sister paper, the *Philadelphia Daily News*, observed in a November 6 editorial headed FEDERAL BUDGET CHARADE, "Nobody else consistently follows the advice of the sainted I. F. Stone, actually scouring documents to find the hidden zingers.... God bless Barlett and Steele."

◆ **DART** to Detroit television station WJBK, for not giving the devil his due. When the CBS affiliate was asked by the network's late-night news program *America Tonight* to transmit a report on "Devil's Night" — the city's annual pre-Halloween descent into vandalism that leaves hundreds of fires in its wake — news director Mort Meisner flatly refused. "I'm not putting on a reporter to do a hatchet job on this city," he later explained to *The Wall Street Journal*. (According to a page-one story in the November 3 *Detroit Free Press*, the number of this year's reported fires, which left thirteen families homeless, represented an increase over 1989 of some 26 percent.)

◆ **DART** to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, for letting the cat get its tongue. On the busy newsday of October 3 — a day marked by the reunification of the two Germanys after forty-five years of division; by the Senate's approval of an obscure judge to sit on the Supreme Court; and by President Bush's televised appeal for support for his highly controversial budget — *Post-Dispatch* editors chose to devote a third of the front-page — some forty column-inches in all — to a four-photo feature on the rescue of a cat from an apartment-house fire. Numerous catcalls from irate readers ("I wouldn't have been interested even if it had been Garfield," sniffed one; yowled another, "It should have been in Section Z!") drew sympathetic strokes from the paper's new ombudsman, Larry Fiquette. "I think in retrospect," he wrote in his Octo-

ber 7 column, "that the cat-rescue layout should have been cut ... or moved to an inside page. Few would have minded seeing it there."

◆ **DART** to reporter Bill Young of KRGV-TV in Weslaco, Texas, for crossing the border between reporting and informing. After conducting taped interviews with a number of undocumented foreigners at the Catholic Church-sponsored Casa Oscar Romero refugee shelter in the Brownsville area, Young showed the unedited videotape to U.S. Border Patrol agents, who promptly raided the shelter and arrested some thirty-five of its residents. As *Brownsville Herald* city editor Robert Kahn observed in an October 1 commentary, "The Border Patrol did what they are paid to do.... Young, however, went above and beyond — or below and beneath — his calling as a reporter." Young's action, Kahn explained, "made it more difficult for other reporters to gain the confidence of refugees and other immigrants. That will diminish the flow of information to U.S. citizens, who have a real interest in knowing what the immigrants are saying."

◆ **DART** to *Omni*, a consumer magazine on science and technology, for going all the way. While other magazines tempt advertisers with an editorial atmosphere that is ever more inviting, *Omni* stripped to its skin and shamelessly offered its November cover to a first-time, three-page advertiser. Through the cover's centered oval window peeped a shining silver hologram of a cellular phone which, one discovered by lifting the page, bore absolutely no relationship to articles inside; the hologram was, rather, part and parcel of a Motorola pitch on "the future of global communications." Protesting *Omni's* lost credibility, editor Patrice Adcroft, who had valiantly offered to forgo three month's salary if the ad would not be run on the cover, resigned, as did managing editor Steve Fox. In the news accounts that followed, *Omni* president Kathy Keeton defended the cover thusly: "What could be more appropriate than a great example of American technology celebrated in a magazine dedicated to exploring the benefits and fascination of modern science? *Omni* has always



been known for its cutting-edge graphic design and our November cover continues that tradition."

◆ **DART** to the Knoxville, Tennessee, *News-Sentinel*, for transmitting an editorial message without a proper conflict-of-interest signal. The paper's lead editorial of September 26 was a ringing argument against South Central Bell's proposal to develop a fiber optic information and programming network that might directly compete with cable — but it remained totally silent about the fact that the franchise for Knoxville's cable system is held by Scripps Howard, the paper's parent. Similarly, the *Chicago Tribune* tried to channel public opinion against proposed congressional "intrusions" that would limit the exposure of children to what critics describe as "program-length commercials" with their lucrative "spinoffs in the form of toys, lunchboxes, coloring books, you name it" — but failed to acknowledge that a Tribune Company subsidiary maintains a partnership with various producers of nationally syndicated children's programs, including *G.I. Joe*.

◆ **DART** to the Peoria, Illinois, *Journal Star*, for showing how narcissism plays in Peoria's news. The paper's report on the Arthritis Foundation's Mini-Grand-Prix — a fund-raising go-cart race in which eleven local companies and organizations took part — was accompanied by four

illustrative photographs, no fewer than three of which depicted the *Journal Star*'s own team in its *Journal Star* T-shirts and *Journal Star* carts. (The *Journal Star* had come in fourth.) Similarly, the paper's previous-day coverage of a preliminary event — in which a dozen teams competed to see who could change the two front tires of their go-carts in the least amount

four) dismissed without merit by Oakland police. Cooper's probe — which revealed that most of the rapes that didn't happen, didn't happen to poor black women engaged in drug-taking or prostitution — drew a gratifying response from city's police. "Candidly, we blew it," Cooper quoted police chief George Hart as saying on September 18. "Regardless of how it came about ... we absolutely will take immediate action to correct it." Among the promised reforms: the training of investigators, a review of procedures, the restoration of a working relationship with rape crisis workers, and the reopening of 203 cases dismissed last year.

◆ **DART** to the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, *Gazette*, for an editorial that didn't blaze any ethical trails. Arguing that a new recreational trail, proposed to be built along an abandoned trolley route between Cedar Rapids and Lisbon, was "neither welcome nor needed," the October 3 editorial deemed as "sound and understandable" the objections to the plan raised by nearby homeowners — but it neglected to mention that among those nearby homeowners is Joe Hladky III, president and publisher of the Cedar Rapids *Gazette*.

◆ **LAUREL** to *The Toledo Blade* and staff writers Sam Roe and Dave Murray, for "The Secret Files of Internal Affairs," an explosive report on the failure of the city's police division to police itself. Based on a seven-month inquiry into the 5,550 allegations of misconduct filed since the inception of the internal affairs unit in 1973 (records of which were obtained by the *Blade* through recent decisions by Ohio's State Supreme Court), the eight-day series (June 24-July 1), documented a disturbing system of double-standard justice — a system in which cops have been getting away with drunken driving, domestic violence, sex offenses, and more, while their colleagues and superiors helped them cover up their crimes; it also revealed that an uncommonly high percentage of charges of police brutality — some 98 percent — have been dismissed. The *Blade*'s disclosures were followed by official pledges of reform, not the least of which involves the establishment of a civilian review board to deal with citizens' complaints.

◆ **DART** to *USA Today*, for making a wrong turn and parking auto writer James R. Healey's supercharged report on Honda's "hot" new sportscar — the \$60,000 Acura NSX — in a page-one "cover story" spot. Following the above-the-fold, four-color, five-by-six inch, two-view photo headed ACURA'S ROAD ROCKET were forty-four overheated column-inches on, among other things, the car's "leather womb" interior and its engine's "primal howl." The piece also noted in passing, apparently without irony, that the NSX has created "bushels of hype." ◆

This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, to whom nominations should be directed.



Al Harkader/Peoria Journal Star

of time — was accompanied by a 7-by-6-inch photo of one of the eleven teams that didn't win: the *Peoria Journal Star*.

◆ **LAUREL** to the *San Francisco Examiner* and reporter Candy J. Cooper, for a consciousness-raising series (September 16-17) on the unusually high proportion of reported cases of sexual assault (nearly one out of every

THE HOLLYWOOD TREATMENT



JANUARY/FEBRUARY
1991

Why it's hard
to tell the Tinseltown story
if you don't follow
the studio script

BY NEAL KOCH

Last spring, Larry Rohter, *The New York Times's* Mexico City bureau chief, was shuttling around Central America, covering the Nicaraguan elections and following up on the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Panama, when Hollywood phoned. This wasn't surprising, because Rohter was about to start a new assignment as the *Times's* Hollywood correspondent. What was surprising — at least to Rohter — was that the caller, the head of a movie company, asked him if he would like to write a screenplay. While the caller did not say so explicitly, he made it clear that Rohter would *not* be expected to quit the *Times* while working on the script. Rohter says he declined. But that was only the beginning.

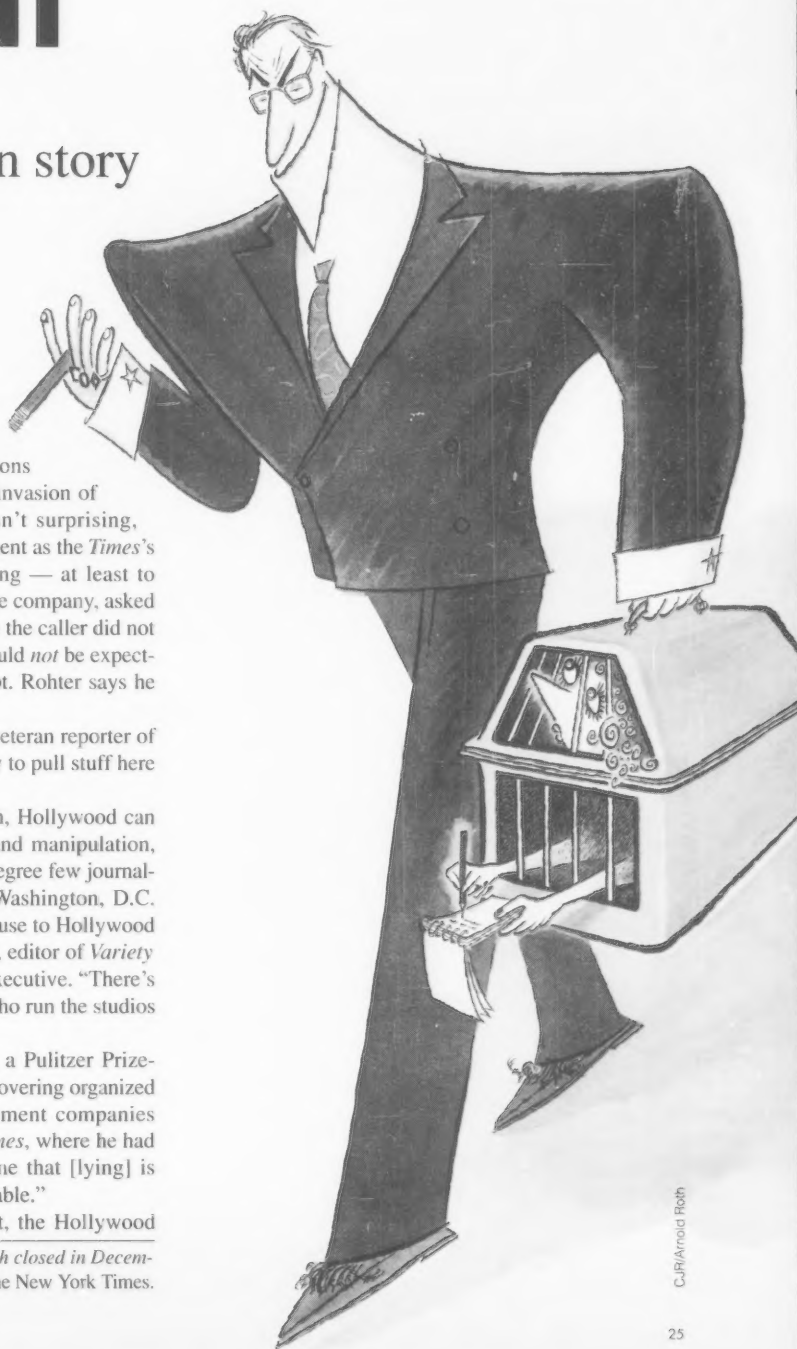
After several months on his new beat this veteran reporter of third-world coups and intrigues says, "People try to pull stuff here that no politician would ever dare pull."

Indeed, for all the glamour, glitz, and froth, Hollywood can pose problems of attempted media seduction and manipulation, outsized egos, arrogance, and brazen lying to a degree few journalists encounter elsewhere — except, perhaps, Washington, D.C. "Someone switching from the Reagan White House to Hollywood would feel very much at home," says Peter Bart, editor of *Variety* and a veteran of twenty years as a Hollywood executive. "There's a pathological need to manipulate. The people who run the studios are control freaks."

"It's a lying industry," says Al Delugach, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who spent nearly forty years covering organized crime, labor, politics, business, and entertainment companies before retiring in 1989 from the *Los Angeles Times*, where he had worked since 1970. "Sometimes it seems to me that [lying] is almost raised to the level of being socially desirable."

Regarded by some as a cushy assignment, the Hollywood

Neal Koch was an editor of *Channels* magazine, which closed in December. He has written about the television industry for *The New York Times*.



CJR/Arnold Roth

beat is anything but. Hollywood is, first and foremost, a company town, an industrial village. The industry is entertainment and it is one of the few industries in which America still dominates — the second-largest contributor to the U.S. balance of payments, behind aircraft. Film exports alone contribute an estimated \$2.5 billion annually, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Moreover, American-made films, television programs, and music recordings have a tremendous impact on culture worldwide. They define the terms for entertainment, in the process communicating val-



**"In Hollywood
the 'A stars' and their press agents
see the press
as only to be manipulated"**

Tom Brokaw

ues, influencing expectations, and providing shared experiences.

Historically, however, reporting on Hollywood has consisted mainly of handouts, gossip, and virtually bought space. "There was a big wink between the parties involved in the coverage, as if to say, 'I'll take care of you and you take care of me,'" says Alex Ben Block, executive editor, special issues, at *The Hollywood Reporter*. "For many years it was the toy department and you had hacks. But today you have a lot of people who are first-rate."

Most reporters trace the change back to the late 1970s. The seminal event that created and defined modern Hollywood coverage was the David Begelman scandal, in which the head of Columbia Pictures was caught forging checks. Although Begelman eventually resigned under pressure, he has worked steadily since. The person who suffered most was the man who blew the whistle, actor Cliff Robertson. He didn't work in Hollywood for the next six years.

The *Los Angeles Times*, whose entertainment coverage before the Begelman scandal was handled mostly by critics and columnists, was scooped on the story in its own back-

yard by *The Wall Street Journal*, primarily, and *The Washington Post*. As a result, the *Times* (and many other newspapers) reevaluated their approach to Hollywood and committed themselves to more solid coverage. Today it is not uncommon to see articles scrutinizing studios' financial dealings and even the occasional piece probing mob influence in Hollywood.

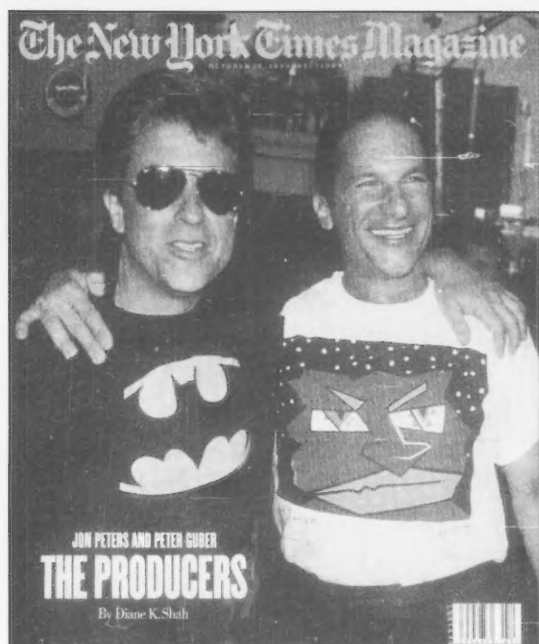
Still, reporting as informed and candid as HOW BLIND IS HOLLYWOOD TO ETHICS? which appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* last April, is a rarity. Written by Jack Mathews from reporting by himself, Elaine Dutka, and Nina J. Easton, it concluded with a quote from a veteran Hollywood talent agent: "People will do anything they have to do, leverage anyone they have to leverage, screw any of their friends to get what they want for themselves and that's at every level of the business...."

Since the Begelman scandal, other developments have heightened the importance of Hollywood as a news story. Large publicly held companies entered the business, a trend that began with the acquisition of Paramount by Gulf & Western in 1967. In 1983, Rupert Murdoch made a run at Warner Communications, spreading takeover mania to the entertainment industry. As stock prices rose in that sector, Wall Street investment bankers began looking for new Hollywood companies to take public. The story rolled on as many of these smaller companies failed to live up to their hype, with a number of them, notably the De Laurentiis Entertainment Group, crashing and burning. Now, the story has turned into one of increasing globalization and concentration of power in the hands of a few giant media companies, such as Time Warner. When the purchase of MCA by Matsushita closes early this year, more than half of Hollywood's major studios will be foreign-owned.

Another significant topic was the development of ancillary markets for movies and TV shows — home video, foreign sales, cable, pay TV, a burgeoning number of independent television stations — while other American industries, such as steel and autos, went into decline. As MBAs drifted into show business, stories started focusing on the art of the deal. Even the general public latched on to reports of box-office grosses, popularized by such programs as *Entertainment Tonight*. As Block of *The Hollywood Reporter* observes, Hollywood news "was no longer just in the amusement section" of newspapers, "but in the business section and often on the front page."

Today, many journalists, industry executives, and producers say that the beat that most closely resembles the Hollywood beat is the capital beat. Both require an understanding of powerful people — celebrities with big egos — and of their relationships with others; and both involve reporting on coalition building by the players. But even experienced Washington hands have a hard time when they switch coasts.

"It differs at every conceivable level," says NBC's Tom Brokaw, who anchored a prime-time special called *The New Hollywood* last March and seems to be in no hurry to return. (The focus was on the increasing concentration of power in the hands of a few big international corporations, and the



**Producers Guber and Peters
tried to produce
a *New York Times* profile
of themselves,
starting with a meeting with
the *Magazine's* editors**

effect this has on the marketplace of ideas.) In reporting the story, Brokaw discovered a frustrating Hollywood peculiarity — namely, that otherwise sophisticated industry veterans don't seem to understand the meanings of the terms “off-the-record” and “on-the-record.” And production often bogged down as press agents for sources tried to initiate extended negotiations over conditions for interviews. “We were constantly rowing through the swamps of Hollywood p.r.,” says Brokaw. “There was a lot of heavy lifting. I wouldn't like to do it every day.”

Comparing Hollywood politics with Washington politics, Brokaw observes that in Washington “there is some clear understanding of what it means to be in the public arena. In Hollywood — and it may have something to do with those who cover Hollywood — the ‘A’ stars and their press agents see the press as only to be manipulated.”

“The Hollywood principals have no understanding of what journalism is supposed to be,” says Warren Hoge, editor of *The New York Times Magazine* and formerly that paper's assistant managing editor for culture, who scrutinized Hollywood coverage for the *Times* last winter before

choosing a replacement for veteran reporter Aljean Harmetz, who had left the paper to write a book. Producers, he says, “were shocked at the notion that the journalists were not cooperating,” says Hoge, who has been a newspaper correspondent both overseas and in Washington. “I've never seen anything like it anywhere else.”

In her October 22, 1989, *New York Times Magazine* profile of producers Peter Guber and Jon Peters, who now run Columbia Pictures, free-lance writer Diane K. Shah incorporated into the structure of her piece the attempt by Guber and Peters to produce the story themselves, starting with a meeting with the magazine's editors: in return for shifting the focus of the piece away from the duo, the *Times* would be offered exclusive access to the set of *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. When the *Times* declined, the producers offered to arrange Shah's reporting schedule, in addition to providing a list of people for her to call. Then there was the heavy-handed hint that they would orchestrate a buzz in Hollywood about Shah's just-completed book to make it a hot property among film studios and agents.

Institutionally, Hollywood is hostile to virtually any reporting not seen as promoting its product. “Most people in Hollywood see journalists as the rough social equivalent of flacks,” says William Broyles, Jr., a former editor of *Newsweek*, *California*, and *Texas Monthly* magazines, now a television writer-producer who co-created ABC's *China Beach*. “They are useful for promotion and semi-dangerous any other way.”

Hollywood's main approach to the press is built around cadres of “planters” — seeming legions whose sole job is to get their company's version of reality into news columns and on news programs, with virtually every announcement, no matter how trivial, being trumpeted by fax, phone, and mail. Many companies go so far as to employ one media relations staff for the consumer press, another for trade and business publications, and a third for corporate matters.

For a single episode of a single TV series, pitches may come from a host of flacks — publicists representing the network on which the program airs, others representing one or more of its stars, and still others employed by the studio that made the show, and, finally, those employed by the show's individual producer. In an effort to get out from under the deluge, *People* magazine's West Coast office recently changed its fax number, hoping to start all over again.

Hollywood's second-level of manipulation involves negotiating deals with the press for access to stars, sets, and executives in return for a measure of control over the resulting articles. Typically, the dickering is over the approval of quotes, photographs, and writer, the timing of the release of stories, and, most prized of all, the placement of a client on a national magazine's cover.

Some publicists will exact revenge if their clients appear in non-cover features. In some cases, profiles appear as the price of getting access to another client of the publicist or talent agent who represents both celebrities. “At most publications, you need those publicists for access,” says Richard Turner, a *Wall Street Journal* staff reporter and former Hollywood bureau chief of *TV Guide*, “so some people

wind up making a lot of compromises. There are a lot of places that give photo approval, cover approval — who knows *what* they do with copy.”

Some writers have learned that access to movie sets can depend on whether they ask unpleasant questions or produce less than flattering copy. Kim Masters, now a staff writer for *The Washington Post's* Style section, says that Warner Brothers refused to allow her access to *Batman* director Tim Burton for a free-lance profile of him because of various brief items she had written as a senior writer with *Premiere* magazine. One item speculated that with all the money sunk into *Batman*, there might be changes in the Warner executive ranks if it didn't succeed at the box office. Another predicted

that *Pink Cadillac*, a Warner Brothers film starring Clint Eastwood, wouldn't be very successful. “I called Rob Friedman [president of Warner's worldwide advertising and publicity] and that was expressly stated,” says Masters. “They said, ‘Get another writer.’” The *Post* chose instead to forego the Burton profile. Friedman's office told CJR he was not available for comment.

“On the celebrity side, everybody is playing this access game, this horse trading,” says Michael Cieply, an investigative business reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*. “You will pay dearly for those two hours with a star; they will be on your cover. It's a racket.”

It's a racket that landed one of its most adept practition-

THE TERMINATOR AT WORK?

When it comes to strong-arming the Hollywood press, some of the biggest muscle belongs to Arnold Schwarzenegger, who hasn't hesitated to use it, says author Wendy Leigh. And few journalists have been willing to cry foul.

Leigh claims that Schwarzenegger — rumored to harbor national political ambitions — has waged a heavy-handed campaign first to suppress her book, *Arnold, An Unauthorized Biography*, and then to sabotage its promotion.

Some journalists have found her reporting worthy of attention. *Time* made it part of a profile of Schwarzenegger that ran in the magazine's May 28 international edition. And accounts of the contretemps surrounding the alleged attempts to interfere with the book appeared in *New York* magazine and the *Chicago Tribune* last May and in *Newsday* last July.

But for the most part, the Hollywood publicity machine rolls on, and puffy cover stories on Schwarzenegger, timed to coincide with the release of his latest movies, continue to appear. They rarely contain more than a dismissive mention of Leigh's book, let alone an independent analysis of its content.

James Willwerth, a *Time* correspondent for twenty-three years and the author of *Time's* profile of Schwarzenegger, says he's not a fan of Leigh's gossipy type of journalism. But, he adds, after checking out her research, using her thirty-four pages of source notes in the back of the book as a guide, he came away with respect for her thoroughness. “It was very well reported,” Willwerth says. “My nose told me that the book was on target.”

In *Arnold*, Leigh persuasively portrays Schwarzenegger as an often crude womanizer — perhaps a misogynist — of limited morals who has been given to expressions of racism, anti-Semitism, and admiration for Hitler's ability to lead.

Citing the Berlin Document Center as a source of documents which have further been authenticated by the World Jewish Congress, Leigh reports that Schwarzenegger's father, Gustav, police chief of the Austrian village of Thal, applied for membership in the Nazi party in 1938 and was subsequently accepted. And she reminds readers of Arnold's

public support of Kurt Waldheim, even after revelations of the Austrian president's Nazi past.

Leigh says that Gustav was an alcoholic who raised his two sons, Arnold and Meinhard, as bullies who delighted in publicly humiliating friends as well as rivals. She reports further that Schwarzenegger owes much of his success in bodybuilding contests to an expertly honed aptitude for undermining his opponents psychologically, as well as to the use, according to fellow bodybuilders she interviewed, of anabolic steroids for many years.

Leigh portrays Schwarzenegger as a calculating, intense salesman who at an early age set out to create an image that would eventually propel him to wealth and international celebrity. Bodybuilding was just the first step. National political ambitions followed, with rumors that he might be angling for a run at the U.S. Senate, something that Schwarzenegger has denied. A staunch conservative Republican, he married into the Kennedy clan and was appointed chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports by George Bush, for whom he campaigned in 1988. Writes Leigh, “Arnold embraced ... the ruthlessness and the dark side of the American dream.”

Schwarzenegger's publicist, Charlotte Parker, calls the book inaccurate, but declined repeated requests from CJR for specifics and cut the interview short. Schwarzenegger himself, the publicist said, was unavailable for comment.

Leigh says that as she began researching her book here and overseas she received “strange” late-night phone calls, “whispering that I'd better be careful.” She says she went into hiding to write the book, sequestering documents in a bank vault and shredding papers daily.

Her publisher, Contemporary Books in Chicago, says it received phone calls from Schwarzenegger associates, already known to the publisher, offering money and a different book, to be co-authored by Schwarzenegger, if Contemporary would drop Leigh's book. Someone claiming to be connected with the publishing firm called its printing plant eight times with questions about the book, the company says. Before *Arnold*, Contemporary says, it hadn't had a

ers, Pat Kingsley, on *Los Angeles Magazine*'s 1990 list of the thirty most powerful people in L.A. Kingsley has used her celebrity clients to build national political influence for herself by delivering them for fundraisers for candidates and causes she favors. It was Kingsley, for example, who arranged Michael Dukakis's introduction to the Hollywood community in 1987 at a party given by Kingsley client Sally Field.

Such power grew out of the intense competition between news organizations that, over the last decade, began tripping over one another in their attempt to satisfy the public appetite for Hollywood news and gossip. Many publications opened or beefed up their Hollywood bureaus. New

specialty magazines sprang up, such as *Premiere* and *Entertainment Weekly*, and a rash of TV shows spawned by the success of *Entertainment Tonight* appeared, including CNN's *Showbiz Today*.

Reporters found editors throughout their publications paying more attention to stories even remotely touching on Hollywood. "There was more and more of a tendency and reason to jazz up a story with celebrity names," recalls former *Los Angeles Times* reporter Al Delugach, "even though they were just straight business stories." This produced what he terms "paparazzi reporters."

"The magazine business is so competitive," publicist Kingsley told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1988, "they seem

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**When it comes to strong-arming
the Hollywood press,
some of the biggest muscle
belongs to
Arnold Schwarzenegger,
who hasn't hesitated
to use it,
says biographer Wendy Leigh**

break-in in ten years. Then it had four in one month.

Contemporary says that it moved the production schedule up three weeks, shifted the printing to a hidden location, installed security guards, and began using secret passwords and a fake title.

Leigh says that when she hit the promotional circuit, television show bookings and filmed appearances were mysteriously canceled at the last minute — in one case, even as TV promos ran — as were planned newspaper features for which she had already been interviewed. In at least one case Schwarzenegger himself turned up on the show soon after. Bruce Lynn, Leigh's former personal publicist, says he believes that Charlotte Parker threatened producers of TV shows that they wouldn't get Schwarzenegger again if they put Leigh on the air. "People told me that," says Lynn. Lynn adds that a booker for one national program — which he declines to name because, he says, he still does business there — told him, "No way. We're doing Arnold for the movie [*Total Recall*], and we don't want to upset him."

"All publicists make deals," says Lynn, "but this is the first time I've been censored."

Time's Willwerth says he wasn't threatened, but did receive "urgent, demanding pleas" from Parker to avoid mentioning the book. But he says that while she called it unfair, she never claimed it was inaccurate.

Parker categorically denies any efforts by Schwarzenegger or any of his associates to inhibit either the book's publication or promotional efforts on its behalf.

Schwarzenegger is pursuing a libel suit against Leigh in Britain over information she supplied to the writer of an article about him in Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World*. Although the paper settled last spring by giving Schwarzenegger £30,000 and a published apology, Leigh's attorney says she will not settle because the information she gave was accurate. The attorney, who accuses the tabloid of having "embellished" her information and calls the suit against Leigh an attempt at harassment, points out that Schwarzenegger has attempted no court action in this country, where it is more difficult to successfully sue for libel. N.K.

willing to promise almost anything to get what they want." In the process, says the *Times*'s Cieply, "journalists handed a big stick to the people on the other side. And, quite rationally, they decided to use it."

In fact, emboldened by their success at negotiating with mass-market magazines on access to their clients, publicists now frequently make similar demands about business stories. And when executives of entertainment companies do deign to talk to the press, they seem to feel less constrained to tell the truth than executives in other industries. "You don't often find people who will lie on the record when it's a provable lie," says Bill Knoedelseder, executive producer of Fox Entertainment News, who started his career in journalism by writing about organized crime. "In Hollywood you will. And they don't care. It's like a badge of honor!"

To be sure, most companies, in any industry, are uncomfortable having their finances and inner workings

definitions of "profit" and "revenue." The terms' meanings change not only from studio to studio but from contract to contract. For example, in response to Art Buchwald's claim that the Paramount Pictures' Eddie Murphy movie *Coming to America* incorporated a Buchwald script idea and that therefore he is entitled to a share of the profits, the studio argues that although the film ranked among the top ten box-office hits of 1988, it does not show a net profit.

In addition to fuzzy definitions, Hollywood numbers are notoriously hard to pin down because entertainment valuations usually depend on present-value estimates of future revenues from uncertain products to be launched into highly volatile, largely unpredictable ancillary markets. "It's a very murky sort of situation," says *Los Angeles Times* assistant business editor Stephen West, who divides his time between coverage of the entertainment, media, securities, and insurance industries. "It leaves open a wider possibility for the management of earnings than what may be the case in other industries."

Even those industry insiders who complain privately that the press doesn't cover their business with sufficient rigor rarely give out usable facts. They fear the information could be traced back to them, and within the tight little Hollywood island, nobody knows who might be involved in the next deal. "Everyone's standing in a glass house," explains the *Los Angeles Times*'s Cieply. "Sometimes you think you've gone a month without an on-the-record conversation." Says Warren Hoge of *The New York Times*, "There is an aversion to being the identified source that is more acute in Hollywood than in any place I've ever encountered."

Last April, for instance, in an assessment of the Walt Disney company's then-long string of failures in prime-time television production, *Los Angeles Times* writer Jeff Kaye reported that not only had Disney executives declined to be interviewed, but that "Disney staffers—including Randy Reiss, executive vice-president of Walt Disney Pictures and president of its network TV division—also took the highly unusual step of calling people who have worked on Disney television programs to ask them not to talk to the *Times*. Some people also were asked if they knew of anybody who had agreed to be interviewed."

A beat so relationship-dependent and personality-driven produces an unusually high level of tension, given the unavoidable tradeoffs between access and independence. Editors want reporters who have a sense of Hollywood's history and its constantly shifting sands, but who haven't gone native. Too often, however, the temptation to go native proves irresistible.

It's not hard to understand why some of the best journalists have succumbed. The Hollywood beat brings reporters face-to-face with other young, highly verbal people who party with stars, drive company sports cars with cellular phones to weekends in Palm Springs, lunch in expensive restaurants, attend private movie screenings, and observe irregular hours. Admission requires no formal credentials, and even lower-level executives and mildly unsuccessful producers can earn large sums relatively quickly. "More than with any other industry they cover," notes Richard W. Stevenson, a Los Angeles-based business correspondent for



David Strick/Onyx

**Publicist Pat Kingsley
has used her celebrity clients
to build national political influence
for herself
by delivering them for fundraisers
for causes she favors**

scrutinized by the press. But entertainment companies are more secretive than most. Unlike aerospace contractors—the only industry to contribute more to this country's balance of payments than entertainment—movie studios rarely hold government contracts. So they needn't be unduly concerned that bribery scandals, cost overruns, inflated billings, or failure to present themselves to shareholders in a realistic light will result in congressional hearings or a loss of federal largess.

Moreover, even when internal financial information does become available, it's frequently of very limited use because of the industry's highly unusual accounting methods. Most notably, studios rely on complex and ever-shifting

The New York Times, "journalists probably spend more time thinking about how they could do the job better than the twenty-five-year-old kid across the desk from them making \$250,000."

Observes Warren Hoge, "The main literary form in Hollywood is the screenplay, and it is not really a literary form. Those people who write well enough to cover the story can easily become participants in the story at far higher rates than any newspaper can pay."

"For a journalist, who is given an enormous responsibility," adds an experienced public relations executive who asked not to be identified, "the compensation is out of whack. So it's very enticing." One result, this source says, is that "there are always some who feel there are opportunities to ingratiate themselves and so [their coverage] may not be as hard-hitting" as it might be otherwise.

One Saturday morning Los Angeles softball game, which started out as a match between reporters and editors, has evolved into a game largely played by screenwriters and industry executives, with a number of the players remaining the same. Says first-baseman David Israel, co-executive producer of NBC's *Midnight Caller* and a former newspaper columnist, "Covering Hollywood is the only job where reporters aren't sure whether to pitch or catch. All those people who, while they're doing journalism, would like to think that they're being objective, may, in the back of their minds think, 'These guys buy screenplays; maybe I have a shot.'" (Israel, incidentally, made the switch from journalism to the entertainment industry before joining the Saturday-morning players.)

Of course, there's nothing new about journalists going into industries they cover. But many insiders consider the extent of the defection in Hollywood to be one of the profession's dirty little secrets, with some reporters switching sides not long after getting transferred to the entertainment beat. This has promoted the notion that — despite denials — there are those who angle for the assignment in a deliberate attempt to cross over. While several *Newsweek* staffers have defected, the pattern has been particularly evident at the *L.A. Times*. A 1987 *Los Angeles* magazine article titled "Scooped Up" noted that six of the paper's entertainment reporters had defected to the industry in recent years. "With so many reporters leaving," wrote author Jim Seale, "editors find themselves in the same position as the Scotland Yard inspector who continued to send undercover detectives to the London whorehouse to gather evidence, only to see one after another 'go native.'"

Such losses to the industry make it that much harder for those who remain to deal with executives already confident of their ability to manage the news. "It tends to make them think that all the rest of us are waiting for the right job offer," says Larry Rohrer. "It's insulting."

Many Hollywood executives seem unable or unwilling to regard journalists as professional observers, preferring instead to categorize them as either friends or foes. A favorable article frequently brings a phone call from the subject saying, "You handled that nicely. I'm your friend for life." It's a beat where people a reporter barely knows will say

"All those journalists who would like to think they're being objective may, in the back of their minds, think, 'These guys buy screenplays; maybe I have a shot'"

Former newspaper columnist David Israel, now co-executive producer of NBC's Midnight Caller



without cracking a smile, "I'm speaking to you off the record as your friend."

The other side of the coin is that negative remarks in print fade from memory very slowly. "You talk about elephants," says Ron Grover, entertainment-industry reporter and L.A. bureau chief for *Business Week*, his voice rising. "Have these guys got memories!" Grover says that as the result of an unflattering, but accurate, article he wrote, one studio head, whom he declines to name, will communicate with him only by mail.

"The only people who are more thin-skinned," says editor-turned-producer William Broyles, Jr., "are journalists."

A final frustration in getting a story into print can come from a reporter's boss. Many say their editors seem driven to involve themselves in questioning and rewriting Hollywood stories to a degree not experienced with stories they file on other subjects. "Everybody's got an opinion," says Grover. "Everybody messes with it," says *Forbes* senior editor Lisa Gubernick.

Reporters speculate as to the reasons why. Most boil down to the old saw that when it comes to show business, everyone's a critic. One reporter suggests that New York editors in particular gravitate toward dispatches from the Coast because the Hollywood stories remind them so much of their own newsroom politics.

In the end, some prefer to look at the amusing, if surrealistic, side of covering Hollywood. Says Gubernick, "I have never covered a beat where your sources air-kiss you." ♦

A PIONEERING PROGRAM FIGHTS FOR

BY NORMAN ODER

South Africa Now, the weekly television newsmagazine, has been a unique and much-praised source of news from southern Africa for nearly three years. Last fall, however, two major public television stations decided not to renew it, saying, in the case of Los Angeles, that it was biased, and, in Boston, that it was no longer needed. After protests by viewers and the press, both stations reconsidered. But the controversy raised questions that linger as the show struggles to stay alive.

Produced by Globalvision, an independent New York City-based production company, the half-hour program is seen on some seventy-five cable and public stations across the U.S., as well as in twelve foreign countries. Veteran network-news producers Danny Schechter and Rory O'Connor started the show to combat what they perceived as the networks' acquiescence in South Africa's media restrictions; by 1988 scenes of unrest had been driven off U.S. TV screens and apartheid had moved lower on the American agenda. They got an initial grant from the United Nations and receive continuing support from foundations and individuals.

Promising to provide "uncensored news" in each newscast and to "go behind the headlines," *South Africa Now* provides an interesting mix of news, interviews, and cultural reports, concentrating on black opponents of the white government. The staff is multiracial, the anchors are black, some of them South African. Though produced on a shoestring, it has beaten the networks on some big stories, including the news last year that Armscor, a state-affiliated South African company, had secretly sold arms to Iraq, and it has probed the political and social roots of

such issues as "black-on-black violence," which are often reported only in sound-bites. Anti-apartheid leaders, including Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, have praised the Emmy-award-winning program for keeping the South Africa story alive.

The show also covers the coverage. In November, for example, it analyzed an *ABC World News Tonight* story reporting a decline in Nelson Mandela's popularity, criticizing the network for, among other things, failing to identify some of Mandela's critics as aligned with rival movements. At the end of that segment, anchor Phillip Tomlinson said, "I'm sure some of our stories could be examined in this way too, but we don't reach the millions [that ABC reaches]."

South Africa Now's critics have indeed been examining its stories. In October, station manager Stephen Kulczycki at Los Angeles's KCET decided not to renew the upcoming thirteen-week cycle of the show, saying it featured too narrow a range of views, focusing too much on Mandela's African National Congress. Neo-conservative activist David Horowitz, the former *Ramparts* editor who heads the Los Angeles-based Committee on Media Integrity and who calls *South Africa Now* "Marxist propaganda," had complained about the show, as well as about other KCET programs. Kulczycki says he met with Horowitz several times, but denies that Horowitz had influenced the *South Africa Now* decision.

And the show's critics have critics. *Los Angeles Times* television columnist Howard Rosenberg questioned whether the KCET cancellation signaled "the

intellectual graying and sterilization of PBS." He observed that Horowitz had not called for balancing KCET's lineup of "far-right to just-right-of-center" news and public-affairs shows. Area viewers launched a telephone and letter-writing campaign. One city councilman said he might ask the council to withhold funding

(\$25,000 last year) to the station.

Within two weeks KCET reversed itself and renewed the show. Station officials said *South Africa Now* had assured them that future shows would include a wider range of viewpoints,

and that they had already seen evidence of that in a segment they had pre-screened (although Schechter, the show's executive producer, points out that the segment had been in production before the controversy began). Nevertheless, KCET will label the show as a "point-of-view" program.

In Boston, meanwhile, public television's WGBH took the program off its UHF station, WGBX, in November. Director of broadcasting Dan Everett told *The Boston Globe* that *South Africa Now* had outlived its usefulness because the mainstream media "are covering the story in more depth" now that media restrictions in South Africa have been relaxed. In a later interview, Everett said *South Africa Now* had attracted no measurable audience, that no one had even commented when the show's time slot had been moved in September.

Everett's statement about South Africa coverage prompted the liberal media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) to calculate that coverage of South Africa dropped significantly after Mandela's U.S. tour. According to FAIR, CBS, NBC, and ABC devoted a total of only about sixty min-



Norman Oder is a free-lance writer based on Long Island.

ITS LIFE

utes to the South African story between July 1 and October 15 — about one and a third minutes each per week. And Everett said that viewers, mainly Africans and African-Americans, told him they felt the show did indeed provide a perspective “not available through the mainstream media.” He also heard from a mainstream newspaper: in an editorial the *Globe* not only criticized WGBH but suggested the expansion of *South Africa Now*. After two weeks, WGBH restored the show to the air.

As those controversies fade, questions about when and how to cover the complicated and contentious South African story linger.

In a program produced in October, Schechter addressed criticisms that his show is biased in a prepared on-air commentary. “Sure we have a point of view,” he said, “but it’s to give voice to the range of views of African people whose aspirations and struggles are often underreported on television.... As much as possible we want the people there to tell their own story their own way.”

Schechter contends that the American press wasn’t subjected to criticism in Poland, for example, when it focused on Solidarity rather than the Polish government. A focus on grass-roots organizers and liberation movements like the ANC, now the government’s main negotiating partner, is not only a proper response to historical overemphasis on white politics, he says, but sound news judgment.

South Africa Now segments are often featured on Cable News Network’s *CNN World Report*, a compilation of TV news from around the world. *World Report* editor-in-chief Stuart Loory says *South Africa Now* provides an antidote to South African Broadcasting Corporation

segments, and “covers stories that other people aren’t covering.” The show “does not follow the normal standard of objectivity that we apply to American journalism,” he adds. “It is more in keeping with the European standard of interpretation and analysis. I would never put it in CNN’s regular newscast without a disclaimer.”

South Africa Now does not seem to scrutinize the government’s opponents as energetically as it does the government. In September, for example, Winnie Mandela, wife of the ANC leader, was charged with kidnapping and assault relating to the activities of her “football club,” a group of bodyguards many of her neighbors considered thugs. When the charges were made, *South Africa Now* interviewed one of Winnie Mandela’s former lawyers, who maintained that the charge was timed to coincide with South Africa President F.W. de Klerk’s U.S. visit, and pointed out that

police officers had not been tried for alleged death-squad killings. In October, *South Africa Now* quoted an ANC official who called the charges “a political matter” and filmed Winnie Mandela, who declined to be interviewed, receiving an award in New York from *Essence* magazine. While the show has reported some criticism of Winnie Mandela, it has not cited South African and U.S. press reports about an outcry within the ANC over her appointment as the head of the ANC’s department of social welfare. “We missed that story,” Schechter concedes, adding that his producers hope to do more substantial reporting in the future on Winnie Mandela.

Those critics who contend that *South Africa Now* is not tough enough on the African National Congress will not be mollified by the news that the show’s parent, Globalvision, was chosen by the ANC to produce a home video — which went on sale in November — of Nelson

Mandela’s triumphant U.S. tour. The ANC, which selected Globalvision from among several applicants, had no editorial control over the video, *Mandela in America*. But Globalvision will donate a percentage of the profits from the video, if any, to the Mandela Freedom Fund, a U.S. foundation set up to support educational and humanitarian projects in South Africa. Though not officially part of the ANC, it was designated by Mandela as an agent for American donations during his tour. It should be pointed out, meanwhile, that Globalvision was also chosen by PBS to do a special on Mandela last February.

When it comes to covering South Africa, of course, there is disagreement about what constitutes good journalism, and U.S.-style “objectivity” is not everyone’s model. “Given the general conservatism of much news coverage on TV, *South Africa Now* is a very welcome antidote,” says Thomas Karis, a South Africa expert and professor emeritus of political science at the City University of New York. When the program was threatened in Boston and Los Angeles, columnist Clarence Page of the *Chicago Tribune*, who has reported from South Africa, wrote, “I fear a world without *South Africa Now* will return me to dependency on networks that usually overlook the broad diversity of news, views, and events of the third world in favor of famine, floods, and coups d’etat. And if that’s not a bias, what is?”

Page may soon face what he fears. *South Africa Now* is in serious financial trouble. Unlike many PBS shows, the program has trouble raising corporate support, a problem that Schechter attributes to the show’s critical coverage of corporations doing business in South Africa. Speaking in late November, he said the program may fold after its current cycle ends, in late January. If that happens, Globalvision will organize its archives to provide footage to others, and may produce specials. Also, Schechter says, Globalvision may try to produce a show in South Africa itself. ♦



The upstairs and downstairs of Boston's media

A look at the press John Silber detests

BY RICHARD TODD

The season of the Angry Voter was a particularly benign one in the commonwealth — a balmy October that ended in a bracing little freeze, and then a few days of genuine Indian summer lasting right up to the eve of Election Day. In my part of the state, the west, I stalked the Angry Voter in vain, but I figured he must be found in quantity in Boston and environs. Judging by what one read and heard, we soon would see crowds surging against police lines and hear the pop of tear gas containers, just like the old days.

As it happened, though, the state overwhelmingly rejected the proposal that was supposed to embody its rage, the Citizens for Limited Taxation proposal to roll back taxes to 1988 levels. And in William Weld we chose a governor whose chief asset, as the campaign wore on, appeared to be his unflappable good humor. In retrospect, most of the “anger” seems to have happened on the airwaves and on the page — but there was plenty of it there.

Last spring, Christopher Daly, *The Washington Post's* New England correspondent, remarked that three people

Richard Todd, the former editor of New England Monthly, edits books under his own imprint for Houghton Mifflin in Boston.

dominated public discourse in Massachusetts: Barbara Anderson, Jerry Williams, and Howie Carr. None of these are names to conjure with outside the state. Anderson is executive director of the citizens' taxation group, but the other two are media figures, and both are master packagers of vituperation. Williams hosts a popular talk show on WRKO radio, and Howie Carr writes a column for the tabloid *Boston Herald*. He is a fellow with an evident love for the art form in which he is gifted, which is insult. To this list one would have to add a fourth name: that of Mike Barnicle, the *Boston Globe* columnist who is himself no slouch at invective. The “discourse” was directed at a single subject: the woeful situation in which the state government found itself, and more exactly it was directed at the body, heart, and soul of Governor Michael Dukakis. Not that anyone used the title: Carr's preferred name for him was Pee Wee. This was a period of really extraordinary coarseness. Carr's election-day farewell to the governor was headlined PEE WEE FINALLY HEADS OFF INTO WHERE-ARE-THEY-NOW LAND, and it read in part: “What a pathetic end for the henpecked little wimp.” Boston is such a civilized place.

The story of the year in Boston was, of course, the emergence of John Silber, president of Boston University, the academic turned street-tough candidate. (One local broadcast figure, David Brudnoy, called him “Joe Six-Pack with a Ph.D.”) Silber caught the Boston press by surprise — perhaps because it had seen him up close as the unloved president of BU. And perhaps because the press was caught by surprise Silber became a bigger story than might otherwise have been the case.

Not long before the primary, *The Boston Globe* ran a front-page analysis of the race by Curtis Wilkie describing “the self-immolation” of Silber's campaign. The Sunday before the primary a front-page news story reported Silber showing some gains in the polls, but gave the election to opponent Francis X. Bellotti. Two days later Silber trounced Bellotti.

It is a regrettable attribute of the modern mind that we would admit to almost any sin rather than be thought stupid. I think this must explain the *Globe's* initial response to the Silber victory, which was to run a self-accusatory article headed SPOTLIGHTING THE MEDIA BIAS AGAINST SILBER. (Much the same sort of self-flagellation occurred after the celebrated Stuart murder case last year: the *Globe* was ready, admirably enough, to question its racial fairness, but less eager to admit that it simply fell all over itself, giving excessive attention to a melodramatic story.)

Some people pointed out that the Silber phenomenon was not all *that* hard to predict: you just had to go the right places, like bars. But as one reporter said, “Reporters don't go to bars any more — we're all too fit.” The story was another casualty of the gentrification of journalism. Mark Jurkowitz, media critic for the once-alternative *Boston Phoenix*, made the useful distinction: “Being wrong about Silber *does not* mean we were unfair to him.”

In any case, it was quickly time for analysis. What better explanation for the Silber victory than the “angry voter”? Silber, whom no one would mistake for Mr. Rogers, had already by primary time offended a few groups that any

politician, let alone a Democratic candidate in the liberal Bay State, might be expected to honor: Jews, Cambodian immigrants, and the aged. He would later point out that it was one intolerant congregation of Jews he had attacked; that it was the welfare system, not Cambodians, he opposed; that in comparing the aged to ripe fruit whose time to drop had come he was attacking the excess money spent on hopeless illness. The primary voters got the message, didn't mind indelicacy, indeed seemed to like straight shooting. (There was another way to look at all this, a way perhaps available to you only if you didn't know too much: the primary voters were likely to vote for anyone who didn't represent the establishment, and Frank Bellotti had been synonymous with Democratic politics in Massachusetts for decades.)

If the press had a hard time getting a handle on Silber, Silber had a curious attitude toward the press. More than most public figures, he seemed to feel that he deserved his own CNN, cockcrow to evensong coverage — that to see him would be to love him. He once remarked that alone among candidates he was capable of giving speeches of Fidel Castro duration, and he seemed to think this would help him too. Needless to say, he objected to "sound bites." Yet he was a master of sound bites, or at least an addict. Apparently as the result of a lifetime of success at verbal intimidation, he seemed to *think* in sound bites; the sharp retort was like a sonnet to him. Sage observers felt at first that his "Silber shockers," as they came to be called, were calculated. Later, when it became clear that they were costing him dearly, it began to look as if he truly could not help himself.

The election was lost, many feel, because of a moment

Natalie Jacobson: "The Madonna of Boston TV news"



CJR/Michael Romanos



Boston Herald

John Silber: "Joe Six-pack with a Ph.D."

on local television, an at-home interview with the only truly beloved figure in Boston media, the WCVB anchorwoman Natalie Jacobson. She was recently called by one columnist the "madonna of the Boston TV news." Indeed, a few years ago her pregnancy was a major subject in both major newspapers (as well as an ever-present element in the evening news). She is married to her co-anchor, Chet Curtis, and together they preside over the city's best network news show with a reassuring familial warmth. You really shouldn't be rude to Natalie. Silber was, snapping at her when she blandly invited him to name his weaknesses. He pointed out that the media had invented "16,000 weaknesses" for him, and why should he add to the list.

One has to say this for Silber: in one way or another, he truly shook up the Boston press corps. By the November 6 election, the city's editors were in amusing disarray. The *Globe* endorsed William Weld, or rather the *Globe's* owners, the Taylor family, endorsed Weld. Its leading columnist, Mike Barnicle, endorsed Silber, using the angry-man for angry-times argument. The day of the pro-Weld editorial, Barnicle wrote, "My professional embarrassment this morning has nearly caused me an inability to perform here professionally." But, he pointed out graciously, "The publisher runs the place, signs all the checks, and I have absolutely never hesitated for a single second to cash every one of them." David Nyhan, the paper's chief political columnist, also endorsed Silber. Martin Nolan, editorial page editor, widely known to be for Silber as well, kept his own counsel, presumably to save his dignity. Good news for the Taylors: one of their employees, Ellen Goodman, came out for Weld, because of Silber's stand on women's issues. She ended her column: "But, Bill, don't take it personally."

However one felt politically, one had to be pleased, in a sort of God's-in-his-heaven way, at the *Globe's*, that is the Taylors', endorsement. Weld, though born in New York, is a descendant of an old Massachusetts family. He looks and walks and talks like Taylors, went to school with a Taylor.



Howie Carr: He saddled Dukakis with the nickname "Pee Wee"

When he enters the Tavern Club — Boston's best club, where the publisher but not the editor of the *Globe* is a member — he looks as if he belongs, as indeed he once did. The local joke, reprinted with delight in the *Herald*, went: "When did the *Globe* make its decision to endorse Weld? Three hundred years ago."

Meanwhile, across town, the *Herald* endorsed John Silber. But its leading columnist, the redoubtable Carr, promptly disendorsed him. It would have been difficult for him to do otherwise, since Silber, like Pee Wee Dukakis, had already earned his own sobriquet from Howie Carr. The candidate was alternately known as The Terminator or Herr Doktor. "If Herr Doktor's handlers have any sense whatsoever, today they'll make sure their guy does a Houdini" was Carr's final advice to his paper's candidate's campaign manager.

Thus borne aloft on the wings of distinguished journalism, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts headed for Election Day.

Every now and then one does wonder why the Boston media aren't just a shade *better*. No American city so depends on intellectual life for its very identity, not to mention its daily bread. Without its universities and medical centers Boston would be a chilly, charming old seaport. Yet little of its presumed sophistication finds its way into the press.

In part, perhaps, it's a matter of stasis. People stay in Boston. A city that might be a springboard to New York, it becomes an alternative, a place where people settle despite a vague sense that they might be doing more interesting work

elsewhere. The cast of characters in Boston journalism remains remarkably stable. Natalie Jacobson and her husband will soon celebrate their twentieth anniversary as anchors. Their counterparts at WBZ-TV, Liz Walker and Jack Williams, reached their tenth without benefit of clergy. The bright young columnists of the *Globe* have been young and bright for a couple of decades now.

Nobody wants to leave Boston because it's so civilized. Probably Howie Carr will be around forever, too, unable to give up the Gardner museum, the symphony, and the right to call people names.

The literary critic Martin Green once wrote, in "The Problem of Boston," of the malaise that afflicted its nineteenth-century writers, who had to face a choice between Boston's culture of conservation and the new modes and voices opening up in New York and elsewhere. Things went better for those who left, but Boston then, as it does now, had its allure, which had to do in part with placing the sanctifying mantle of tradition on the shoulder of any lout who will stand still to receive it.

Another appealing thing about Boston is the illusion that you can have it both ways: you can *almost* live in New York, without the hassle. This sense of being almost a suburb of New York diminishes the local media. For many people here *The New York Times* is the paper of conscience. You feel guilty having missed an item in the *Times*, but skipping the *Globe* is hardly a disgrace. The *Times* reaches only about 35,000 people in the Boston metropolitan area, but they're the right 35,000. You can put together a sensible news menu consisting of *The New York Times*, supplemented by the ten o'clock news on Boston's excellent public television station, WGBH. Anchored for years by Christopher Lydon, a former *New York Times* reporter, who was not long ago joined by the surpassingly elegant Carmen Fields, this show (with its low-key delivery and electronic music) pays close attention to local politics and trots out an endless supply of Cambridge experts on national and international affairs. For some people, reading the Boston papers, or listening to Natalie and Chet, is really optional, a form of entertainment.

In a somewhat convoluted (not to say wacky) way, the best news in Boston journalism may be the partial resurgence of the long-on-the-ropes *Herald*, which has accepted its destiny as a breezy tabloid and kept Boston, for a while anyway, a two-newspaper town. The *Herald* has — to put it kindly — circumscribed ambitions, and yet on any given local story it can be faster and more detailed than the *Globe*. On more than one embarrassing occasion the *Herald* has beaten the *Globe* on a story that ought to be theirs, notably the recent debunking of the cold-fusion theory by MIT scientists.

The *Herald* seems more comfortable in its skin than the *Globe*, and it loves to have sport with its rival. The *Herald's* gossip columnist, Norma Nathan — "The Eye" — invariably refers to the *Globe* as "The Other Rag in Town — Eye'll think of the name," and on second reference it's TOR. Most of the *Herald's* columnists — let's ignore Carr — in contrast to the *Globe's* look outward, do some hard reporting, and try to avoid solipsism. One of them, Margery Eagan, has wit. This is her reaction to news during the cam-

paign that John Silber would willingly submit to random drug-testing:

Can you imagine [him] ensconced in his scholarly BU digs, all rich mahogany and oak, diplomas on the wall, pulling out his love beads and lava lamp and flaming red bandana, dropping a Bob Marley disc on the stereo and ordering one of his underlings, "Let's roll up a bone, man."

Asking "Why aren't the Boston media better?" is really a genteel evasion of the more pointed question: Why isn't the *Globe* better? And that's a puzzler.

It helps to remember that just a generation ago the *Herald* was the paper of record, and the *Globe* still occupied the spot it had for most of its life, as the upstart paper of the Irish working class. It may be that the transition has caused most of its problems.

The *Globe* today is a curious mix of provincial amateurism and sophistication, of lofty intentions and cut corners. It has two of the best younger book critics in the country in Mark Feeney and Gail Caldwell, but you have to search through the Sunday paper for their reviews: there's no separate book section in this most bookish of towns. In H.D.S. Greenway it has a shrewd and experienced foreign editor, but its overseas coverage remains quixotic. (The *Globe* maintains a bureau in Moscow but not in London.) The paper suffers from curious little small-townisms that have been with it for years: an automotive correspondent who refers to his wife as Mrs. Auto Writer, an inane daily pun over the weather forecast.

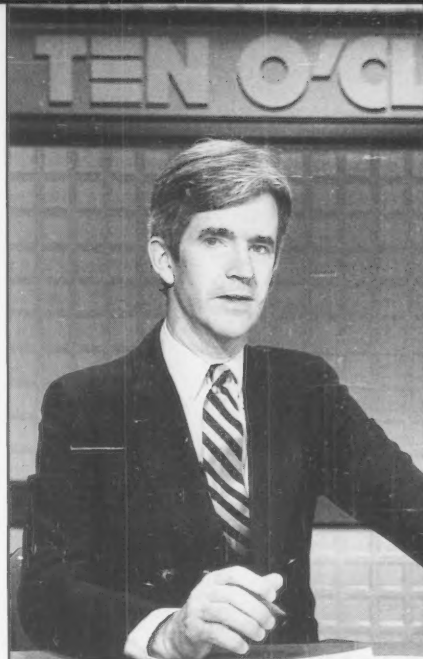
Once the *Globe's* distinction, now its great curse, is its reputation as a writer's paper. Perhaps there is some finite number of *Globe* columnists. I tried to count them recently

Mike Barnicle: Self-styled friend of the dispossessed



Michael Romanos

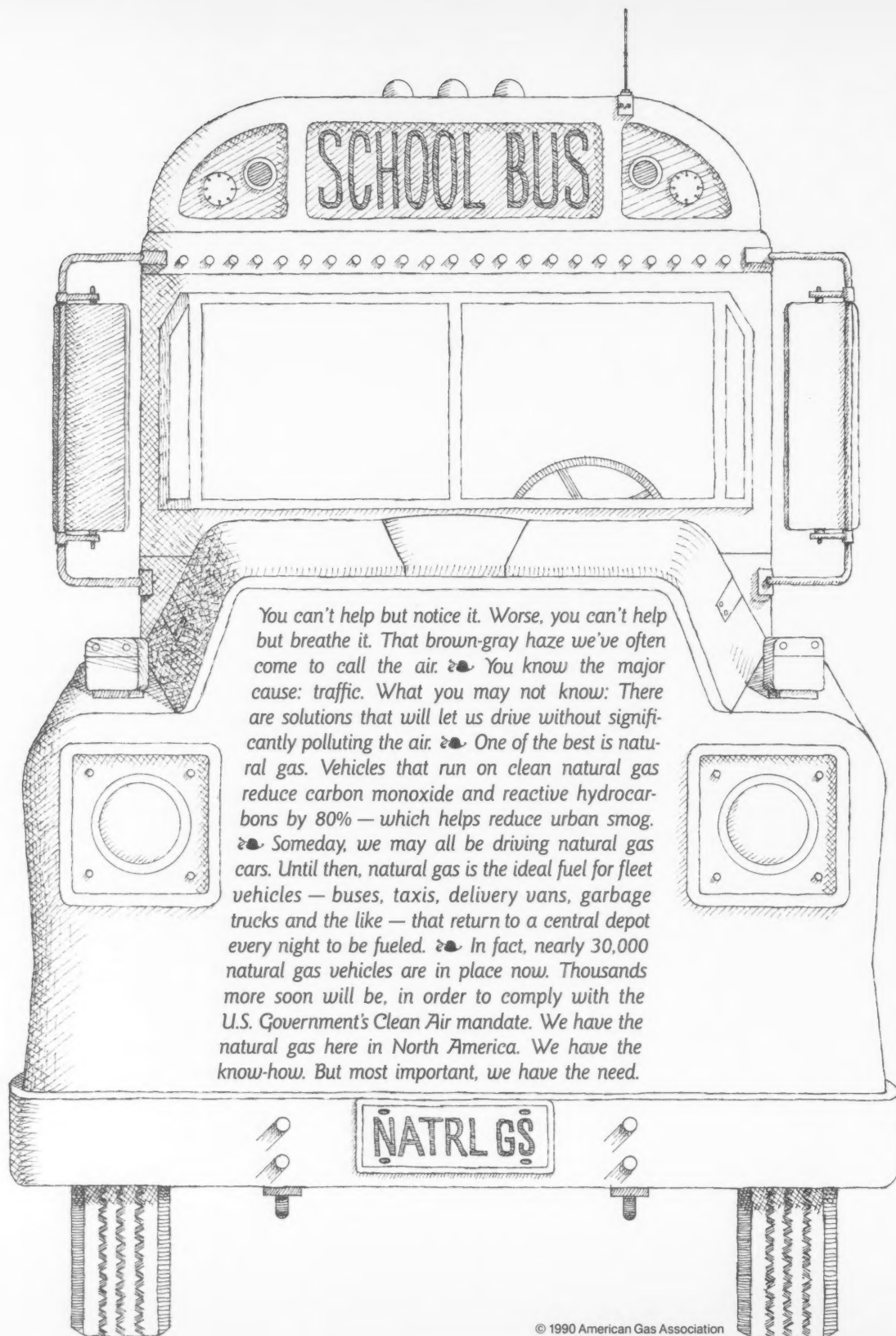
Christopher Lydon: His show pays close attention to local politics and trots out an endless supply of Cambridge experts



but it was like counting fireflies on a summer evening. It's not that the various writers lack talent — though I guess that would explain one or two problems — but their crazy proliferation gives the whole paper an air of out-of-control self-indulgence. For a reader it's cacaphony, like walking in on a party that is two drinks into the mission.

Two columnists dominate: the nationally syndicated Goodman and the locally omnipotent Barnicle. Barnicle — well, you have to hand it to Barnicle. He has a certain genius. He is a self-styled friend of the dispossessed and an enemy of politicians, of corduroy-pants liberals, and of just about anything that smacks of Harvard, public television, and the suburbs. Of him people love to say, "Yeah, and he gets into his Saab" — or Volvo or BMW, you hear it all ways — "and drives out to his house in Lincoln." At his best, Barnicle functions as an ombudsman for the city, which provides him with endless stories of unbridled cruelty and anonymous virtue. If you have just arrived from Cambodia and have been set upon by thugs, if you are stone-blind and ninety-four years old and the water pipes have burst, if you are a thirty-two-year-old firefighter with eight kids and you're waiting for a heart transplant, rest easy: Mike Barnicle will find you. And when Barnicle is not doing that he is hurling insults: "Weld figures homelessness means no summer place in Maine.... His big bust was putting Irish cops in jail for overeating and grabbing a bottle of booze at Christmas."

There's nothing wrong with Barnicle: it's just that he is what the *Globe* does instead of growing up. With his back-of-me-hand invective and his unabashed sentimentality, Barnicle is a cunning, self-willed caricature of an Irish heart, and he loves playing on the nastiest strain in this city's history, the hatred and contempt that still runs between Irish and Yankee. Not long ago he wrote of Boston's mayor, Ray Flynn (seen cozying up to William Weld), "Like so many Harps before him, Ray got sucker-punched by a Wasp." Only in Boston. ♦



You can't help but notice it. Worse, you can't help but breathe it. That brown-gray haze we've often come to call the air. ☹️ You know the major cause: traffic. What you may not know: There are solutions that will let us drive without significantly polluting the air. ☹️ One of the best is natural gas. Vehicles that run on clean natural gas reduce carbon monoxide and reactive hydrocarbons by 80% — which helps reduce urban smog. ☹️ Someday, we may all be driving natural gas cars. Until then, natural gas is the ideal fuel for fleet vehicles — buses, taxis, delivery vans, garbage trucks and the like — that return to a central depot every night to be fueled. ☹️ In fact, nearly 30,000 natural gas vehicles are in place now. Thousands more soon will be, in order to comply with the U.S. Government's Clean Air mandate. We have the natural gas here in North America. We have the know-how. But most important, we have the need.



THE JOURNALIST'S LIFE:
WILLIAM SERRIN

THE CRUCIBLE

Detroit Free Press

William Serrin was interviewed by Karen Rothmyer, a contributing editor to *CJR*, who teaches at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

Twenty-three years ago, America's inner cities exploded in a wave of riots born of anger, racism, and summer heat. Nowhere was the toll more fearful than in Detroit: forty-three people killed, and the city dealt a blow from which it has never recovered.

William Serrin was one of the *Detroit Free Press* reporters who covered the riot, as well as part of a team that subsequently investigated the fatalities. The *Free Press* was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in recognition of its work.

For Serrin, covering the riot was a watershed

experience. It caused him to give up ambitions to go overseas as a foreign correspondent and instead to become an urban affairs reporter. He later worked at The New York Times as the paper's labor reporter. Now a free-lance writer, he has written a book, *Homestead: the Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town*, to be published later this year, that looks at the reasons for the American steel industry's collapse and the effect of that collapse on people and institutions. What follows is an interview with Serrin adapted from *Winning Pulitzers*, to be published by Columbia University Press this spring.

Before the riot my goals were things like to go to Vietnam and cover that. Afterward, I decided the story was right here, not in Washington or Vietnam

William Serrin today



CUR/Linda Radin

I grew up in Saginaw, Michigan, which is a working class town. My dad was a baker. In the 1880s Saginaw was the lumber capital of the world, but you wouldn't know it now, because if you drive there from Detroit you won't see any trees; they cut them all down. After the lumber era they started making GM steering gears there.

The Saginaw River divides the town into two parts: east side and west side. Blacks live on the east side — Stevie Wonder's from Saginaw — and whites on the west side. Blacks never came on our side of town. I went to Arthur Hill High School; the blacks went to Saginaw High. So Arthur Hill's arch rival was Saginaw High, white versus black essentially. During the war my mother got a job testing machine guns so we had a black maid and that was my only association with black people other than sports.

I went to Central Michigan University. I didn't really want to go there, I wanted to go to the University of Michigan, but Michigan was regarded as an upper-class school and my father, being a working class guy, didn't think that you could send your kids there. I was in ROTC and I came out a lieutenant and was in the infantry in Korea in the early 1960s.

Korea really changed me a lot. I had wanted to go to law school but after Korea I was sort of infused with the idea of changing things and I didn't think I could do that in law very effectively. So when I got out of the army in 1964 I cast around and I decided that the only way I could see to write and to make some money was in journalism. I got into a trainee program of the Booth newspaper chain, and after a year of that I was hired by the *Saginaw News*. Anything you did there that could be perceived as remotely liberal could get you in trouble. I got to be friends with some liberal ministers and priests at the time when civil rights actions were just beginning and I remember writing something that I guess could have been regarded as positive about this one minister, an activist kind of guy, and after that I was sort of suspect by certain editors there.

What I really wanted to do was to go to the *Detroit Free Press*. This one time I was out covering some people picketing the Saginaw board of realtors, saying that they were not giving houses to black people, and suddenly this old car pulls up, and out of it comes this guy who looks like a big bear, with big moustaches, and he takes his reporter's notebook out of his pocket and I think, Hey, Big Time. It was Van Sauter, who was then a reporter for the *Free Press*. Later he became president of CBS News. And I thought, I've got to get to the *Free Press* and hang out with these guys. These guys are good.

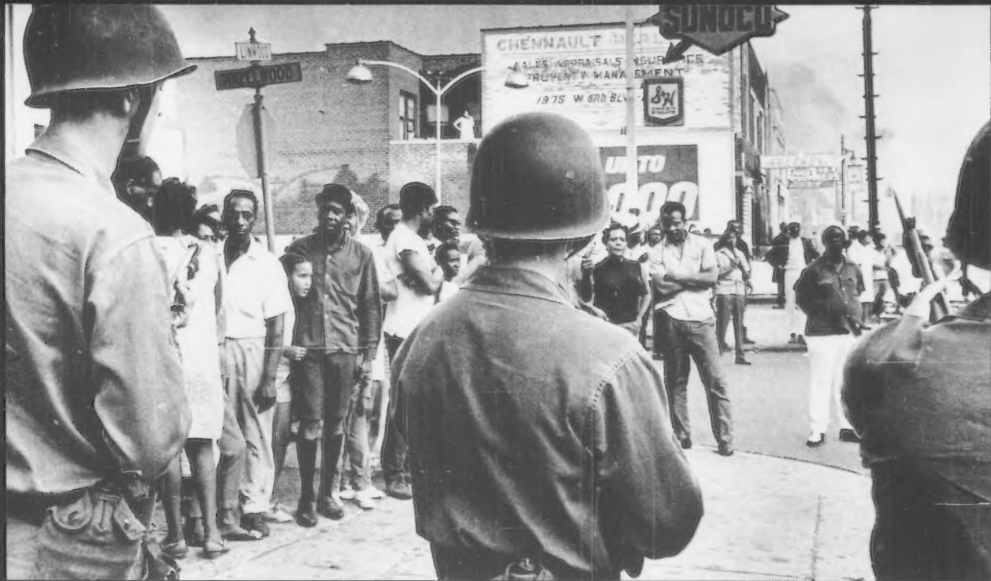
I finally got a job on the *Free Press* in March of

1966. The *Free Press* was a great place to work. It was the flagship paper of the Knight newspapers, or at least we always thought of it as the flagship. The editors liked good writing and Derick Daniels, who was then the assistant executive editor, had a good eye for talent. There was Van Sauter, who had his desk in the corner with a lamp and a rug, and Ellen Goodman, who became a syndicated columnist, and Kurt Luedtke, who is off doing movies now, and George Walker, who later wrote a novel, and a lot of others. There was great competition: Ellen Goodman would knock off some piece, or Van Sauter would, or another fine writer, Barbara Stanton, and you would have to do something to beat them. And we also had a great sense of competition with *The Detroit News*. The deadline was six o'clock and about 6:30 we'd all step over to the Detroit Press Club and have a couple beers before going home and the guys from the *News* would come in and you'd tell them, "I'm going to kick your ass tomorrow."

There were a couple of black people on the paper but it was essentially a white paper and not tuned into the Detroit black community at all. We weren't afraid to go into the community — we would all go to the clubs to hear jazz and we felt quite safe — but we weren't really involved with what was going on there. And certainly the establishment of Detroit was worse: Detroit's leadership, including most of the newspaper executives, lived outside of town, so their view of Detroit was from the freeway coming in and going out. When things blew up the *Free Press* was caught as short as any other institution in town. I've just finished reading a book about Dr. King and I keep thinking, How could I have been so dumb? It was a blind period in America — although I suspect we're just as blind now.

At the time of the riot I was living in Pontiac with my in-laws. My wife had died and I had a little daughter. I was working that Sunday when it started. All reporters should try to work on Sundays because a lot of people don't want to work then and you get great stories. I was driving the twenty-five miles from Pontiac and I remember hearing on the radio that there was a racial disturbance on Twelfth Street. Twelfth Street was a semi-legendary Detroit street, a black street, lots of clubs and stuff. So I raced down to the office and the Sunday editor said, "Get down to Twelfth Street."

So I got there about ten o'clock in the morning and I was the first reporter there — there must have been some radio types and stuff, but I was the first real reporter there — and there were cops all over the joint. So it was great. Honestly. Let's be honest, as a journalist, it was great. Cop-lines up and down the street, the cops all back there, the black guys down over here. So I figured, Hey, I'm not going to stay here behind the lines, and I started to walk toward the black guys. I remember the cops said,



The National Guard moves in (left), and John LeRoy dies (below), one of forty-three people whose deaths the Free Press investigated.



Dennis Brack/Black Star

"Don't go down there," but I wasn't afraid.

So I went down and I was talking to black people, where the story was, and getting some quotes like you're supposed to. There had been a lot of stuff between the cops and the black community before this and the cops had hit this blind pig — an illegal club — during the middle of the night and it was regarded in the black community as "Enough's enough." It was very hot, too, and this thing just exploded. By late morning, I think a lot of people thought the damn thing was under control. But then it just kept going. Once it got to be two or three o'clock and people started torching stuff and throwing firebombs it just took off. I remember John Conyers, the congressman, came and got up on a car with a bullhorn and he was on that car about thirty seconds and people were just yelling "Get him out of there." And Charlie Diggs, he was the other congressman, they didn't even let him get up. They thought better of Conyers; at least they let him get up on the car.

People were being nice to me and some were telling me I should get out of there but I wasn't really worried. I went into a store and called some stuff into the desk and told them, "This is a full-scale riot, you'd better get some people out here; it is starting to go." When I came out these guys from across the street just let loose with this barrage of stuff: bricks and bottles and potatoes, and I got cut in the head. I don't know whether it was because it was me, a white guy, or not. I had this very snappy blue blazer on, looking very good, but they creamed me. So I ran up about two blocks to the police lines and got back behind the lines and our photographer took me to the hospital. I got sewn up in the hospital and I was out of action for awhile. There's still a scar where I got some stitch-

es. Then I went back to the newsroom.

By now it was about five o'clock and the town was being torched. The editors told me to go home, but I wouldn't do it. I wasn't going to let them take my story away from me. This was *my* goddam story. So I went back out and I was lucky again. We knew the National Guard was coming but we didn't know where they were going to go, so I sort of wandered into this high school and pretty soon I saw the guard coming in, tanks and jeeps and weapons. So I got that and called that in. I interviewed the National Guard general, this big fat general, and I threw a little military jargon at him because I was trying to cozy up to him and he kind of thought I was one of them.

I remember him saying to me, "Serrin, how do you handle niggers?" I'm going, "Well, I don't know, sir. How do you handle them?" And he says, "Goddam machine guns, Serrin, we're going to get tough. These niggers, they've had it now." He was going on and on like this. I wrote all of this down and I thought, Jesus, this is incendiary, so when I called it in I changed it and I said the general said they're going to use maximum force, words like that. My future wife, Judy, was an intern then and they had put her to work doing rewrite. That was the first time I ever talked to her. I remember she laughed at me because she knew I was giving her garbage. Would I do it again? Probably not. If some general is so stupid he wants to say that, then put it in the paper.

The riot was racial, no question about it. White cops killing black people, that was racial. And on the other side, a lot of the torching was the rioters attacking Jewish merchants on the main drags.

I didn't go home during those few days. No one did. Everyone stayed at the paper 'til twelve, one o'clock, then got a little sleep and started again at eight. Everyone would go up on top of the *Free*

We looked at autopsy reports and at a ton of bodies and became convinced that the {stated cause of} almost every one of those deaths was bullshit

Press building and you could see the city on fire. Detroit has this old street plan, it's designed by L'Enfant, the same guy who designed Washington, D.C., and you've got this downtown on the river and these spokes radiating out, so you could look up almost every street and you could see all the streets on fire. Every main street, every night, was ablaze. My wife and I got engaged the one night of the riot I didn't go out, a few days after we'd met. I remember sitting on a park bench in Lafayette Park and we decided to get married. You could sit there on that bench and see the town on fire.

Sometime during that week I wrote a short piece on this one kid that was killed, a hillbilly kid. I just took the police stuff and they said he was seen carrying a weapon, a shotgun, and that he was coming down the stairs with this long weapon and the National Guard yelled at him to stop and he didn't so they killed him. It was just like every other story: every death was always the fault of the people who were killed.

Then, about ten days after it was all over, one day I was sitting at my desk and a guy came off the elevator with two kids about eight and nine years old and he said, "I'm looking for Mr. Serrin." You couldn't do that today, with all the guards and everything they have at newspapers, but then people could just walk in off the street. And he was very stern, not angry, but stern. And he said, "Mr. Serrin, you wrote the story on my son." And it was the father of the hillbilly kid. And I said, "Yes, I did." And he said, "Well, I want you to know my son was not a sniper." And he showed me all these pictures of the young man laid out in an open casket in the house — maybe they were too poor for a funeral parlor — picture after picture. And the father would say to me, "Does he look like a sniper? My son was not a sniper." He had driven with the two kids all the way from Tennessee to Detroit and parked his car and walked into the *Detroit Free Press* to tell me this. I took his name and number and said, "Thank you for coming here, let me look into this."

So I went out and talked to people and I found out that his son was one of these kids who, for decades, had come to Detroit to make some money and he was living in this apartment and working in some plant. People said he was a great kid. And then some people told me he had a broom that night he was killed. He was on the stairs with the broom and this guy just killed him, shot him dead.

Kurt Luedtke, who'd been editing the riot coverage, had gone up north and I called him up and I said, "We've really got to investigate every one of these deaths because they're bullshit." And I went to the city editor, Neal Shine, and told him the same thing. So Luedtke came back and we created this team, me, Barbara Stanton, and Gene Goltz, who had won a Pulitzer Prize in Texas for putting some

sheriff in the slammer. So we began that investigation. We split up the forty-three people and we spent about a month interviewing people, getting police reports, and going back to where the shootings had occurred.

I remember this one case where these guys were drilled in a car. The police report said "shot while leaving the scene" and something like "three rounds fired." We found the car still parked and counted all the holes and there were maybe twenty holes in this car and all this blood all over the joint. And we got some good cop stuff from some old-time police reporters and then we made friends with the coroner — one time Goltz gave him a fifth of whiskey, to show "our respect," Goltz said — and we looked at autopsy reports and we personally went and looked at a ton of those bodies.

We became convinced that almost every one of those deaths was bullshit. Like one guy was deaf and never even heard the police. And the hillbilly kid. And the Algiers Motel, where three people were executed. When the story ran there was a big, big to-do. The story was picked up across the country, and there was not a single retraction or correction on any of that stuff. And it was all because of that father coming up.

I think the story did make for some changes, that plus the weight of other riot coverage. And just the times were changing. The cops came under intense scrutiny for the next several years and they began slowly to make an effort to hire black policemen. And the authorities set up a committee which had an effect for awhile and white people became sensitive to black people.

I was changed, too. I mean I obviously had changed in Korea, and I had seen some things there that had opened my eyes to how the world worked, and even before the riot I wrote a lot of iconoclastic stuff. But the riot sort of changed my life. I really began to distrust cops and other authorities and I had not had that experience before in journalism. Before the riot a lot of my goals were things like to rise in journalism, go to Vietnam and cover that as a journalist. Afterward, I threw aside the sort of goofy ambitious things and just decided I wanted to be a more responsible, very basic journalist. The story was right here, not in Washington or Paris or Vietnam, but right here. So I became sort of an urban affairs writer and I did a lot of looking at the police department and stuff like that.

Eventually I left the *Free Press*. I knew I probably wasn't going to go anywhere there because a lot of people had come to distrust me. From their point of view my reporting was too one-sided and certainly anti-establishment. They thought I was too radical, but I thought I was just a hard, tough journalist. ♦

The candidate and the reporter

WHOSE CAMPAIGN IS IT, ANYWAY?

BY DANIEL C. HALLIN

Between the presidential campaigns of 1968 and 1988, the length of the average sound bite shrank from more than forty seconds to less than ten. While this fact alone reflects a significant shift in political reporting on television, the change in content is perhaps even more significant. Partial transcripts of two sets of stories — one from 1968, the other one from 1988 — will serve to illustrate the difference. The first is from *The CBS Evening News* of October 8, 1968.

WALTER CRONKITE: Hubert Humphrey said today that the nuclear age calls for new forms of diplomacy, and he suggested regular summit meetings with the Soviet Union. He made his proposal to a meeting of the nation's newspaper editors and publishers in Washington.

HUMPHREY: (Speaks for one minute twenty-six seconds.)

CRONKITE (over video of press conference): Humphrey was asked about the battered state of the Democratic party.

HUMPHREY: (Speaks for forty-nine seconds.)

CRONKITE: Last Thursday, when he became George Wallace's running mate, retired General Curtis LeMay characterized nuclear weapons as, quote, "just another weapon in the arsenal." He made clear he did not advocate their use in Vietnam. But in his words, "I think there are many occasions when it would be most efficient to use nuclear weapons." Today at a news conference in Los Angeles, the subject came up again.

LEMAY: (Speaks for a minute and fifteen seconds about nuclear weapons and Vietnam; then a jump-cut shifts us to an exchange later in the press conference.)

Now let's fast-forward twenty years. Here's a longer excerpt from ABC's

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election coverage for October 4, 1988:

PETER JENNINGS: Ever since the first presidential debate turned out to be pretty much of a draw, Dukakis' campaign staff has been seeking new ways to get at Vice-President Bush. Here's ABC's Sam Donaldson.

DONALDSON (over video of Dukakis rally): The Dukakis game plan has three parts. First, an increasingly strident stump attack on George Bush's record by the candidate himself. Here's today's version.

DUKAKIS: He was asked to head up a task force on international terrorism. What happened? Mission failed. When he was asked to lead the war on drugs, we all know what happened. The mission has failed.

DONALDSON: To be sure, Dukakis still talks about his own solutions to national problems.

DUKAKIS: (talking to workers in a factory): I want to make sure that every working family in this nation's got basic health insurance. You have it here, it's terrific.

DONALDSON: But more and more his stump speech is aimed at cutting Bush down.

DUKAKIS (in factory): They asked Bush about it; he said, Well, we're going to help the unemployed buy into Medicaid. Tell me what that means. You're unemployed, you haven't got any money, George. Can't buy into anything.

DONALDSON (over video from Dukakis TV ad): Part two of the strategy is to run television ads aimed at undercutting Bush's own attacks on Dukakis. Actors play the part of cynical Bush advisers who try to hoodwink the voters.

"CYNICAL BUSH ADVISER": How long do you expect to get away with this furlough thing?

SECOND ADVISER: Hey Bernie, how long till the election? (Laughter)

VOICE-OVER ANNOUNCER (over graphics): They'd like to sell you a package. Wouldn't you rather choose a president?

DONALDSON (over video of Bush-Dukakis debate, then Quayle, then Bentsen): Part three of the strategy is to show up better in the televised debates. In this Wednesday's, Bentsen versus Quayle, the Dukakis camp is counting on Bentsen to look like the heavyweight.

CAMPAIGN CHAIRMAN PAUL BROUNTAS: He

knows the issues, and I expect he will do a very good job.

DONALDSON: This strategy, they believe, will produce a winner.

ADVISED FRANCIS O'BRIEN: We are making steady progress, and again, it's all the pieces fitting together.

DONALDSON (to camera): The themes of this campaign have turned out to be more negative than positive. But the Dukakis people believe they can help you like his opponent less. Sam Donaldson, ABC News, Toledo.

A report on the Bush campaign followed. A brief excerpt must suffice.

BARRY SERAFIN: By the second stop of the day ... the vice-president was back to the tried and true, the one-liners that in California, for example, have helped him erase a double-digit deficit in the polls. On crime...

BUSH: I support our law enforcement community.

SERAFIN: On education...

BUSH: I will be the education president...

SERAFIN: And another familiar refrain...

BUSH: Read my lips — no new taxes!

In the earlier period, the journalist did little more than set the scene for the candidate or other newsmaker whose speech would dominate the report. For the TV journalist of the 1980s, on the other hand, the words of candidates and other newsmakers are treated as raw material — to be taken apart, combined with other sounds and images, and reintegrated into a new narrative. Chopping speeches and other statements into brief sound bites is only one of many forms of mediation involved in modern television news.

Visuals, including both film and graphics, are used much more than they used to be, as are experts and outside material intended to put the candidate's statements and actions into perspective. Events from different settings are combined into a single story. A striking example of this — and of the mediated form of modern TV news in general —

is a September 24, 1984, CBS story on Bush's vice-presidential campaign in which correspondent David Dow illustrated a point about Bush's campaign strategy by having Bush say a single sentence made up of five one-second sound bites taken from speeches in different cities.

Finally, the modern TV journalist generally imposes on all these elements the unity of a clear story line. The metaphor of "wrapping up" a story is apt: a modern television news story is tightly "packaged" in a way that earlier television news stories were not. And this packaging means that the modern news story is much more journalist-centered than was the early one: the journalist, not the candidate or other "newsmaker," has become the primary communicator.

These changes are partly the result of technological advances—new machines, such as graphics generators and electronic editing units—that have made it possible to produce the complex news stories that predominate today. But the evolution of TV news has also been shaped by at least two other forces. One was the weakening of political consensus and authority in the years of Vietnam and Watergate, which pushed all of American journalism in the direction of more mediated news reporting. (The shift toward a more adversarial relationship between candidates and journalists was part of this broader change in American journalism.) The other was a set of changes in the economics of the television industry that put increasing pressure on the news divisions to keep their eyes on the ratings.

Unmediated news—in the sense that statements of government officials and other major political actors were for the most part reported at face value—was the main operational meaning of "objective journalism." The "credibility gap" of the Vietnam War era, followed by Watergate, made the old forms of reporting seem inadequate. An event early in the Vietnam War—and the press's treatment of it—illustrates the nature of the change. In 1963 a bitter conflict was going on within the Kennedy administration over support for the government of Ngo Dinh Diem. As a result, the administration did not have a unified "line" on

many events. In August, the South Vietnamese government ordered a raid on political opponents in Saigon's Buddhist temples. The U.S. embassy in Saigon attributed the raids, correctly, to Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu; the State Department in Washington absolved Diem and blamed the South Vietnamese army. That left the press with two "objective" dispatches, each quoting high government sources, giving contradictory accounts of the event. *The New York Times* ran the two stories side by side on the front page with a note apologizing to its readers for the contradiction. This was obviously an awkward way to handle the problem, and there was much discussion at the time about how ridiculous the *Times* appeared—the nation's leading newspaper unable to set things straight. Over the years, journalists would increasingly deal with this sort of

The public never has a chance to hear a candidate speak for more than about twenty seconds

problem by taking official statements as merely a surface below which lay some deeper reality—a policy conflict within the administration, for example. To do so, they had to become more active in reporting the news: since no single source could be taken as authoritative, the journalists came to feel that adequate reporting required them to provide their own synthesis and interpretation.

Television was probably slower than the other media to move toward more analytic journalism. But eventually it did so and, as it did, the sort of report that consisted of little more than a two-minute excerpt from a speech or press conference became increasingly rare.

Election coverage proved to be a focal point for change. Following the 1968 campaign there was increasing discussion within the journalistic community about the packaged nature of the modern campaign and the danger that the media were vulnerable to manipulation by can-

didates and their image-shaping handlers.

Television journalists responded to this "fear of flacking" (Michael Robinson's apt phrase) by taking an increasingly adversarial stance toward candidates, dissecting their statements and debunking their image-making strategies. (The interpretive reporting of 1980s campaign coverage was largely taken up with such debunking.) One result is that election coverage has become increasingly negative in tone.

A single comparison must suffice to illustrate this change in tone. Here is Morton Dean's introduction of one Hubert Humphrey sound bite back on September 12, 1968: "From a man who has heard much chatter and noise lately, this call for reason"

And here, almost exactly twenty years later, is Bruce Morton on another Democratic presidential candidate:

Biff! Bang! Powie! It's not a bird; it's not a plane; it's presidential candidate Michael Dukakis in an M1 tank as staff and reporters whoop it up. In the trade of politics, it's called a visual If your candidate is seen in the polls as weak on defense, put him in a tank.

The economic pressure on television news divisions began to be felt in the 1970s, most acutely in local news. Until the early '70s, news was seen as a "loss leader" and was largely insulated from commercial pressure. Then local stations discovered that news could make a lot of money; indeed, by the end of the decade it was common for a local station to make 60 percent of its profit from news. The local television industry is intensely competitive, with at least three stations competing head to head in most markets; thus, it is not surprising that, as stations battled for ratings, this was a period of considerable innovation in the structure of news programs. Consultants brought in to recommend more effective ways of maintaining audience attention typically pointed in the direction of a more tightly structured and faster paced presentation of the news.

The same forces began to impinge on the network news divisions in a serious way in the mid-70s. Since then, commercial pressures on the news divisions have intensified as competition from cable and other economic factors have

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ENTRY INFORMATION

Articles and programs appearing during 1990 are eligible. Entries must be about cancer, cancer research, or cancer therapy; they must have appeared in a national or local mass-communication medium oriented to a lay, non-technical audience; and they must be submitted in English or accompanied by an English translation. Entries must be postmarked by January 31, 1991.

Write for complete entry requirements and copies of official submission forms. Or call (212) 418-6384.

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squeezed network profits. In response, the networks have adopted many of the practices pioneered by the local stations.

These, then, were the forces that converged to produce the modern mediated style of TV news. A case can be made that today's more active form of journalism is much better than the journalism of twenty years ago. Presidential campaigns over the past couple of decades have in fact often been superficial and manipulative. Critics have pressed the networks to be more critical, and the networks have complied. The mediation involved in contemporary election coverage largely involves two kinds of analysis, both of which are certainly laudable. One has to do with explaining the image-making strategies behind the campaign. The other — more useful, but unfortunately less common — involves assessing the validity of statements the candidates make on various issues. An excerpt from an NBC report on one Bush-Dukakis debate in 1988, reported by Jim Wooten, is a case in point:

BUSH: The governor raised taxes five different times.

WOOTEN: The governor also cut taxes eight times, and people in thirty-three states pay a greater percentage of their income in taxes than citizens of Massachusetts. On defense, Bush offered to cancel three weapons systems that had already been eliminated. Dukakis suggested that Bush himself was once sympathetic to a nuclear freeze. He wasn't. He simply said it shouldn't be a partisan issue.

And yet there is a great deal that is disturbing in the mediated or packaged campaign news of the 1980s. First and simplest, it is disturbing that the public never has a chance to hear a candidate — or anyone else — speak for more than about twenty seconds. Journalists hear candidates' stump speeches over and over and find them hopelessly boring. But only a tiny fraction of the public ever hears those stump speeches (except when they crop up in televised debates). And perhaps it would be a good thing if voters were to hear a thirty-second excerpt from those speeches once in a while; allowing the candidate to speak for himself or herself wouldn't preclude the journalist from introducing analysis elsewhere in the story.

Admittedly, some of the long sound bites in early television news were very

dull; many could have been cut in half with little loss. But to hear a politician, or even a community leader or ordinary voter, speak an entire paragraph affords the viewer a chance to perceive something of the person's character and to assess the merits of his or her argument in a way no ten-second sound bite can. The viewer is the judge, not the journalist, whose "wrap-up" invariably serves as a kind of verdict.

Finally, the rise of mediated TV news is connected with the increasing dominance of horse-race campaign coverage, and the inside-dopester tone that goes with it. The association between horse-race coverage and sound-bite journalism is very strong, and for good reason. Focusing on the election as a contest gives the news the kind of dramatic narrative structure valued by modern television. It also helps to solve a problem of authority created by the television journalist's increasingly active role. The mediated form of modern TV news places journalists in a difficult position. They are expected to take center stage as interpreters of the campaign, yet "no one elected the media," as the phrase goes, and their role can easily become a focus of political controversy. It is not surprising, then, that they should feel most comfortable making essentially technical judgments about campaign performance — judgments that can be presented as nonpartisan and verified by polls and the judgments of other political professionals.

Thus, Roger Mudd, then NBC's chief political correspondent, opened and closed his analysis of the first Reagan-Mondale debate, in October 1984, with these words:

Who won or lost was largely a matter of expectations. By most accounts, including Republican ones, Ronald Reagan did not live up to his own standards. By most accounts, including Republican ones, Walter Mondale exceeded his.... As jubilant as the Mondale campaign might be about the debate and its impact on morale, no one is claiming last night's debate was enough to close the enormous gap with Ronald Reagan.

In between, Mudd graded each man's performance. This he did without the slightest reference to the substance of what they said ("from time to time Mondale's voice grew whiney as he fell back

on his old stump speech ..."). But this is to be expected: it is precisely those non-substantive aspects of candidate effectiveness on which the community of political professionals can agree.

Aides for the major campaigns — the so-called spin doctors — first started appearing on camera in substantial numbers in 1980. Eight years later saw the appearance, in substantial numbers, of another species of political insiders, including think-tank academics and campaign consultants not involved with either of the current campaigns. Used to offer technical analysis of the campaign — and the aura of objectivity such analysis provides — they were interviewed on camera about twice as often as voters. (The latter, incidentally, are a declining presence in campaign coverage, dropping from over 20 percent of sound bites in 1972 and 1976 to 3 to 4 percent in 1984 and 1988.)

Here again the position of TV news is ironic. Just as TV decries photo-opportunity and sound-bite campaigning yet builds the news around photo ops and sound bites, so, too, it decries the culture of the campaign consultant, with its emphasis on technique over substance, yet adopts that culture as its own. There are moments, indeed, when it is hard to distinguish the journalists from the political technicians they are interviewing. A notable instance was when Dan Rather, following the first Bush-Dukakis debate, asked an assortment of pollsters and campaign officials questions like, "You're making a George Bush commercial and you're looking for a sound bite of George Bush.... What's his best shot?"

The dominant tone that results from all this, as sociologist Todd Gitlin has pointed out, is a kind of knowing "post-modern" cynicism that debunks image-makers and yet in the end seems to accept them as the only reality we have left. It is hard to feel nostalgic about either the politics of 1968 or the passive television journalism of that era. But it must be said that in 1968 one did have a feeling that the campaign, as it appeared on television, was important, that it was essentially a debate about the future direction of the nation. As sophisticated as it has become, television news has not succeeded in maintaining that sense of seriousness. ♦

CJR Fax Poll

ARE YOU READY FOR '92?

The conventional wisdom about the last presidential election campaign is that it was a toss-up between which was worse: the campaign or the coverage. A lot of journalists swore they would do better next time. Now the next time is upon us. Before the momentum takes over, we invite your comments.

1. How would you rate coverage of the '88 presidential campaign?
☐ As bad as everyone says ☐ Worse ☐ Other
2. How would you rate your own news organization's coverage?
☐ Poor ☐ Adequate ☐ Prize-worthy
3. Has your news organization conducted a post-mortem? ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. What changes, if any, are planned?
.....
5. If you were in charge of campaign coverage, what changes would you make?
.....
6. Do you think coverage affected the outcome of the '88 election? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Do you believe that the media's new truth-in-candidate-advertising squads will make a difference?
☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Do you think coverage of Bush changed after his confrontation with Dan Rather on The CBS Evening News?
☐ Yes ☐ No
9. If so, how?
10. Do you think the news media contribute to voter apathy? ☐ Yes ☐ No
11. If so, how?

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Anne Branscomb, *Toward a Law of Global Communications Networks*

Ellis Cose, *The Press: Inside America's Most Powerful Newspaper Empires*
—From the Newsrooms to the Boardrooms

Reuven Frank, *While It Lasted: The Evolution of Television News*

Loren Ghiglione, *The American Journalist*

Garth Jowett, *Movies as Mass Communication* (co-authored with James M. Linton)

James Kinsella, *Covering the Plague: AIDS and the American Media*

Kati Marton, *The Polk Conspiracy*

John C. Merrill, *The Dialectic in Journalism: Toward a Responsible Use of Press Freedom*

Philip Meyer, *Ethical Journalism: A Guide for Students, Practitioners, and Consumers*

Martin Schram, *The Great American Video Game: Presidential Politics in the Television Age*

Michael Schudson, *Reading the News* (edited with Robert Manoff)

Eleanor Singer, *Reporting of Social Science in the National Media* (with Carol Weiss)

Sally Bedell Smith, *In All His Glory: William S. Paley*

John Stevens, *Sensationalism in the New York Newspapers*

Susan Tifft, *The Patriarch: The Rise and Fall of the Bingham Dynasty* (with Alex Jones)

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Betty Winfield, *FDR and the News Media*

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ON THE JOB

STEVE'S BRAIN

BY STEVE WEINBERG

The investigative reporting part of my brain is now on a computer disk. It happened like this.

Last January, I was asked if I would offer my knowledge of investigative reporting to the world — in the form of an "Expert System," which is a category of what computer mavens call Artificial Intelligence.

The request came from Jean Gaddy Wilson, executive director of New Directions for News, a think tank funded by many of the nation's top dailies. New Directions for News has its office at the University of Missouri School of Journalism in Columbia. I have an office there, too, so it's hard to escape Wilson when she has one of her frequent brainstorms about how to improve our craft.

Wilson knew that for seven years, as executive director of a national organization called Investigative Reporters & Editors, I had been answering such question as: What documents are available to demonstrate that the subject of my probe accepted a kickback? What should I do if the prosecutor threatens to subpoena my notes? How can I find the former treasurer of XYZ Corporation? How do I persuade an important but reluctant source to see me? What should I do if the source goes off the record in the middle of the interview? And so on.

In this age of computer-assisted journalism, Wilson thought it might be useful to capture my answers — and the thought processes undergirding them — on a disk that could be slipped into a

newsroom computer whenever the need arose. Would I cooperate?

I said I would. At the time, as I told her, I knew nothing about Artificial Intelligence and Expert Systems.

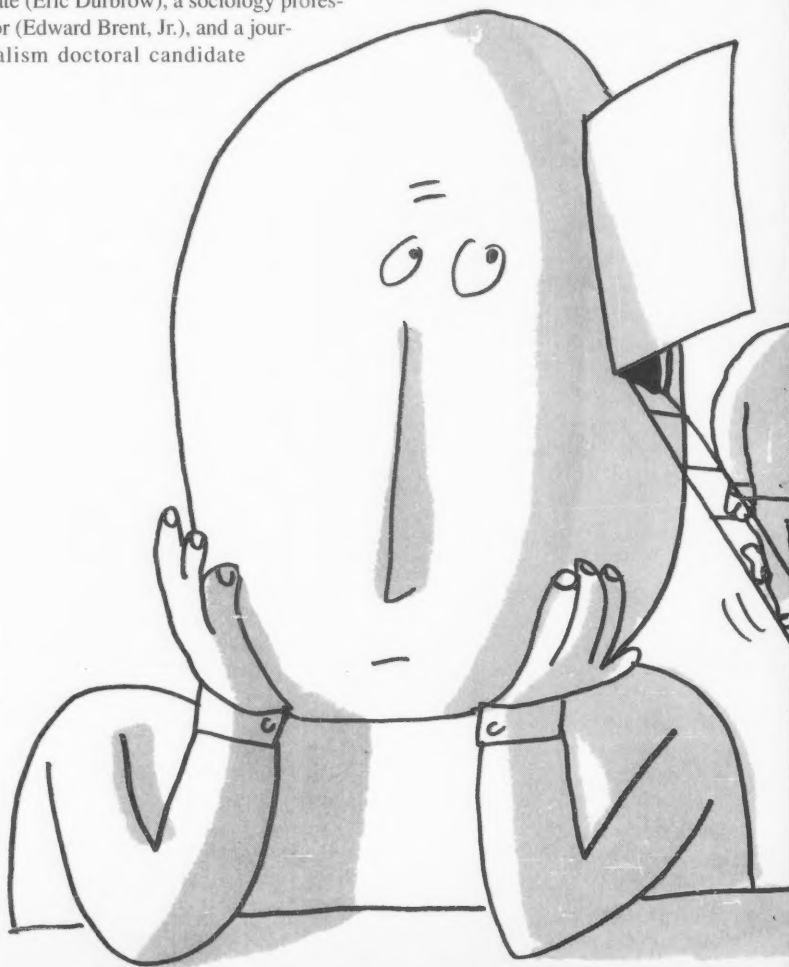
Expert Systems, new to investigative reporting, have been tried successfully in other disciplines. MYCIN helps diagnose infectious diseases. PROSPECTOR analyzes geological data to locate mineral deposits. HOME-SAFE-HOME assesses the residential environment of an elderly person, then recommends ways to make it more comfortable and functional. Such systems are usually developed by experts in the subject working together with experts in writing computer programs.

Wilson matched me with two University of Missouri anthropology professors (Robert Benfer, Jr., and Louanna Furbee), an anthropology doctoral candidate (Eric Durbrow), a sociology professor (Edward Brent, Jr.), and a journalism doctoral candidate

(Min Lee). They knew almost nothing about investigative reporting. But they did know how to ask questions — lots of them — about how and why I proceeded as I did on an in-depth project. They also assured me they knew how to translate my answers into a computer program that would react like an experienced investigative reporter when confronted with certain quandries.

The computer mavens dubbed our yet-to-be-developed Expert System MUCK-RAKER. We had a name. I wondered if we would ever have much more.

When I first started learning about Expert Systems, a doubt entered my mind: Why bother? There are already half-a-dozen excellent books, written by journalists for journalists, on how to dig out and use information. The mavens had an answer.



CJR/Niculae Asciut

Steve Weinberg, who stepped down as executive director of Investigative Reporters & Editors last June, now devotes his time to free-lancing and teaching. He is also a contributing editor of CJR.

True, they said, an Expert System usually contains smaller amounts of information than a textbook, but Expert Systems can tailor answers to meet the problem of a particular journalist. With a book, a reader might be unsure whether she has overlooked or misunderstood something important. With an Expert System a journalist can be more confident that the advice is on target. Because the computer program guides the user, she can be less anxious about misinterpretations.

A book is "static" after publication, they said, unless the author prepares a new edition. That usually means an interval of at least several years. An Expert System, by way of contrast, is easily cumulative. Once the knowledge is represented and validated on the computer disk, the Expert System will never overlook anything when queried, and can be updated quickly.

It seemed ironic, then, that when I started educating the computer-wizard anthropologists and sociologists about investigative reporting I did so by assigning them to read some old-fashioned "static" books. They were quick studies.

Soon they were interviewing me in detail: How do you decide which documents to look for in the early stages, which documents to search out later? When is it time to start interviewing key sources? What happens if they refuse to let you in the door?

My answers weren't always sufficiently self-analytical for the brain pickers. This was a problem Benfer, Furbee, and Brent were prepared to deal with, having described it in their manual "Expert Systems." "An expert in some activity has by definition reduced the world's complexity by his or her specialization," they write. One result is that "much of the knowledge lies outside direct conscious awareness...." It turned out that much of what I do was indeed outside my consciousness.

Then there was the question of my "world view," which, as the brain probers note in their manual, "probably needs to be at least partly known if an Expert System faithful to the expert's [world view] is to be produced." Until they started asking me to formulate one, I was unaware that I might possess a world view. Or at least a journalistic world view. Simply put, it consists of the stubborn belief that everything is documentable — that someplace in a file cabinet or a computer terminal or a human source's brain is the information I need to write the most accurate, insightful story possible.

I began to understand what my questioners meant by "out-of-awareness knowledge" when, to get me to express my methods of reporting (in the context of my newly discovered *weltanschauung*) they resorted to using all sorts of homely examples. In what ways do people explain how to determine the appropriate person to marry? How to ride a bicycle? When to look someone in the eye, and when to avoid direct eye contact?

My interrogators explained that if I could rack my brain to adequately verbalize how and why I did what I did when pursuing a story, the computer disk would faithfully reflect my reasoning. According to the "Expert Systems" manual:

Most Expert Systems, when asked "why" they are asking a question, can explain why the information is needed by displaying explanatory text provided by the author, or by

showing the user which rules require that information.

Many Expert Systems can also show "how" a value was obtained. Most have some form of on-line, context-sensitive help. Most permit users to request definitions of unfamiliar terms. Many can trace the program's reasoning by displaying the sequence of steps it went through to draw conclusions. Many permit sensitivity analyses and simulations through a what-if analysis to see how the Expert System's conclusions would differ if one or more variables had different values.

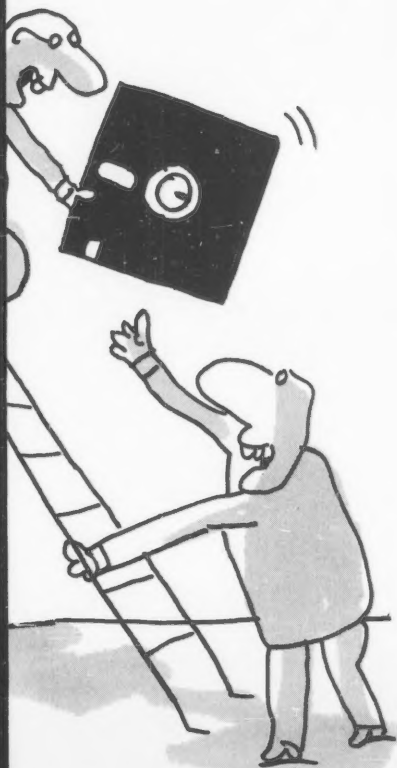
It was Louanna Furbee, the Ph.D. anthropologist, who worked hardest in the early stages to puzzle out the underlying logic (if any, I worried) of how I worked on an investigation. She

The computer mavens dubbed our system Muckraker

explained that, after interviewing me, she would try to reduce what I had said into concepts. She would write each concept separately on an index card, then ask me to sort the cards into groupings. From those groupings, she hoped to sketch a tree of knowledge, which the computer programmers could then translate into electronic impulses.

When I viewed the tree a week later, I was amazed at how Furbee had managed to translate my words into a graphic that would be the basis of a computer program. She had sketched fifty-seven connected branches. The two main trunks were "paper trails" and "people trails," a distinction I had made when she interviewed me. (When conducting an investigation, I almost always consult paper first, then find the people to help explain the paper.)

On the "paper trail" trunk, Furbee sketched my distinctions between primary-source documents and secondary-source accounts. She also captured my thinking about how the type of subject (Is the story primarily about an individual, an institution, or an issue?) determines which documents I will seek first. I have articulated all of this in magazine articles, books, and newsroom workshops, but probably never so clearly as when I was being prodded by her anthro-



STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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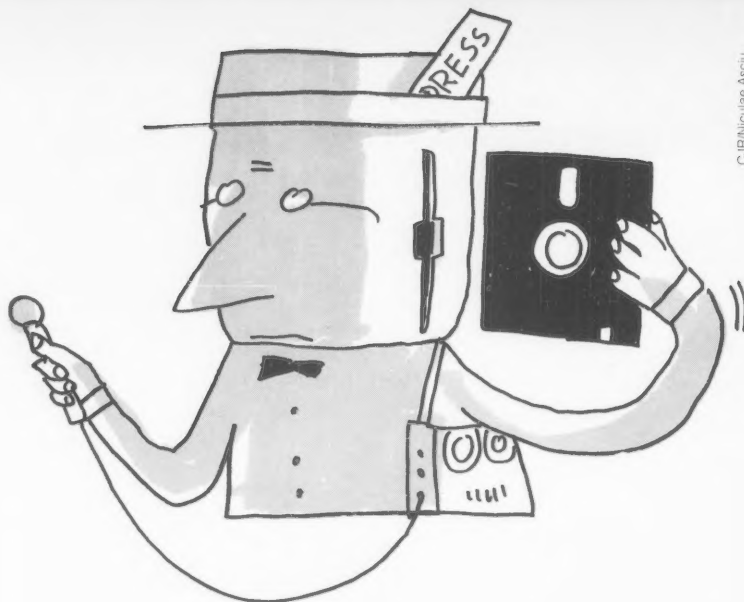
A. Total number of copies (net press run):	40,822
B. Paid circulation:	
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales:	2,433
2. Mail subscriptions:	29,670
C. Total paid circulation:	32,103
D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means: samples, complimentary and other free copies:	2,348
E. Total Distribution:	34,451
F. Copies not distributed:	
1. Office use, left over, unaccounted for, spoiled after printing:	3,429
2. Return from news agents:	2,942
G. TOTAL:	40,822

Actual number copies of single issue published nearest to filing date:

A. Total number of copies (net press run):	45,865
B. Paid circulation:	
1. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales:	2,500
2. Mail subscriptions:	33,254
C. Total paid circulation:	35,754
D. Free distribution by mail, carrier or other means: samples, complimentary and other free copies:	3,532
E. Total Distribution:	39,286
F. Copies not distributed:	
1. Office use, left over, unaccounted for, spoiled after printing:	3,629
2. Return from news agents:	2,950
G. TOTAL:	45,865

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CJRN/Circulation Assoc.

pologically based questions.

On the "people" trunk, Furbie focused on the two main problems I had found of most concern to journalists: getting in the door and, once inside, conducting the interview successfully. She worked in branches reflecting my thinking on when to request an interview by letter or telegram rather than by telephone, on dealing with secretaries and other potential bars to access, on how to bring an off-the-record source back on the record.

Using her tree, the rest of the Expert Systems team began to imprint my thinking onto a computer disk. Jean Wilson was pushing the team hard, hoping to have something to show to the New Directions for News board of directors gathering in Washington, D.C., at the American Society of Newspaper Editors annual convention. She planned to conduct the demonstration on April Fool's Day. An omen? I hoped not.

When Wilson switched on the computer terminal in Washington, the first screen that greeted the board members read:

MUCKRAKER

An Expert System for Journalists

Muckraker's purpose is to provide advice on following the paper trail and interviewing sources. After a series of questions, Muckraker will make a recommendation. Use Muckraker to help plan your investigation.

To respond to Muckraker's questions, move the cursor to a response, press Return, and then press End. Many questions allow you to

give more than one response. Simply press Return after each response and press End when you are finished. Do not hesitate to get more information on a question. Type a '/' and select 'Why?'

Muckraker then answered questions about several types of investigative projects, including campaign finance practices, padding of travel expenses by government employees, and how to detect favoritism in government agency bidding and purchasing systems. A future version might also provide advice on how to investigate a variety of institutions such as charities, hospitals, and for-profit businesses. At any time, the journalist at the computer will be able to switch from the paper trail to the people trail, querying the Expert System about getting human sources to open up. Wilson told me that the directors liked what they saw. ♦

New Directions for News is now negotiating with several technology companies to manufacture the first applied Expert System in investigative reporting. To make such a system commercially available will apparently cost tens of thousands of dollars for salaries, hardware, software, and marketing. (In the interest of full disclosure, I should add that, as of now, I have neither asked for nor received payment for my work. If, in the future, someone offers to pay me for time spent on the project, I might find it hard to say no.)

BOOKS

ALICIA'S LITTLE TABLOID

BY JAMES BOYLAN

The twentieth century has contributed only a few significant new entities to the roll of American newspapers — *The Christian Science Monitor* (1908); the *Chicago Sun* (1941), which survives in merged form; *USA Today*, which contributed its diaphanous presence to the 1980s. And what else? *Newsday*, of course, the only giant to arise solely from the fertile but treacherous fields of suburbia.

The simple explanation of *Newsday*'s success has always been that it plunked itself down in the yeastiest region of America's postwar population explosion, in the two suburban counties of Long Island, which stretches like a great ironing board almost a hundred miles eastward from New York City. Such an answer is hardly sufficient, for there is nothing automatic about the growth of suburban newspapers; many have stagnated or foundered. Moreover, there were other equally inviting areas in the United States, but none produced a new newspaper that came to so dominate its region or, as *Newsday* has done in recent years, turned to invade the central city.

Somewhat ambivalent answers can be found in this volume by Robert F. Keeler, a *Newsday* staffer commissioned by the newspaper to write a commemorative volume for its semi-centennial. This is a thicket of a book, hip-deep in detail, with a cast of hundreds if not thousands, and a microcosmic approach to storytelling. Its chief mission sometimes

James Boylan is a contributing editor of CIR.

seems to be less educational than judgmental.

The book's jacket asserts that Keeler was given complete independence in research and writing. This is very much in consonance with the current ethos at *Newsday*, which honors the new corporate standard — that apparently unflinching honesty is the best p.r. Near the end, Bob Greene, the "Big Daddy" who is portrayed as the spirit of the old, less reputable *Newsday*, declares, "We all got Calvinist someplace along the line." Nothing, it seems, but a Calvinist history would do — scourging the sinners and recounting their foibles in unsparing detail.

Interviewing literally hundreds of survivors, Keeler has collected accounts of half a century of office warfare, with the wounded losers allowed to talk back to winners; even the dead are occasionally spoken ill of. The pioneers, he makes clear, had bad habits; the most important of the early editors, Alan Hathway, drank on the job and speculated in real estate. (He was also a journalist of fire and tenacity.)

Keeler makes clear most of all that before it turned Calvinist, *Newsday* was not at all fastidious about the kinds of contacts with the surrounding world that newspapers now shun — making and breaking politicians, boosting local development, intimidating advertisers,

busting the teeth of would-be competitors.

Keeler tells the central story with vigor. It comes in three sagas — the Ali-cian (1940-1963), the Captaincy (1963-1970), and the Chandlerian (1970-). The first had the ring of a Hollywood society comedy of the 1940s: madcap Democratic daughter of a big-time newspaper publisher (Alicia Patterson) marries sober-sided Republican millionaire (Harry Guggenheim), who bankrolls a new newspaper for her to keep her out of

NEWSDAY: A CANDID HISTORY OF THE RESPECTABLE TABLOID

BY ROBERT F. KEELER
ARBOR HOUSE/WILLIAM MORROW, 770 PP.
\$24.95

mischief. She proves to be a hell of an editor and drives her little tabloid to success among the new Levittowns and the corrupt old politics of postwar Long Island. Husband and wife have amusing imbroglios over presidential endorsements.

Second: a tense political struggle of the 1960s. Alicia dies abruptly, at the age of fifty-six, leaving her twenty-three-year-old newspaper in the hands of her dour husband, who has retained his wartime title of captain. In general, the newspaper does well enough under the Captain, surprisingly well. The Captain seeks an heir, and in February 1967 he

Alicia Patterson at the presses on *Newsday*'s first day of publication, September 3, 1940



courtesy Newsday

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courtesy Newsday



Harry Guggenheim and new publisher Bill Moyers meet with Newsday employees, 1967

brings in the thirty-two-year-old Bill Moyers, fresh from service as press secretary in the Johnson administration. Moyers warns the Captain that they might not see eye to eye on politics; the Captain doesn't listen. But within three years, the Captain, nearing death, concludes that Moyers is leading a radical newsroom conspiracy against the Vietnam War. He cuts Moyers out of his will and sells the paper out from under him to Times Mirror, the monster conglomerate.

The third saga is a 1980s-style struggle in the corporate boardrooms. Otis Chandler, head of Times Mirror, runs *Newsday* with a surprisingly light hand, standing by patiently while the newspaper dips its toes into the two New York City boroughs, Queens and Brooklyn, at the western end of Long Island, and then splashes across the East River into Manhattan to challenge the ailing New York *Daily News*. This period, occupied as it is with promotions, demotions, transfers, retirements, corporate planning, expansion, and other fixations of the apostles of order, has nowhere near the charm in telling of the era primeval.

These dramas scarcely exhaust the contents of the history. For running beneath them is what I take to be the real story of *Newsday* — the collective being, the heterogeneous organization, growing up and just starting to grow old. Many strands are woven through this narrative, the rarest and most important of which is a history of reporting — what *Newsday*

has covered, who has done it and how, gloriously or otherwise. Here Bob Greene, large, disorderly, aggressive, loathsome, and awesome, is the resident spirit — the hero not only of the paper's earlier, somewhat disreputable exploits but also of its coups. He first appears in 1953, after jobs in, as he puts it, "selling sterling silver to brides and sniffing armpits" of garments at a department store returns window, then as an investigator for the New York City Anti-Crime Committee, in which role he helped *Newsday* win its first Pulitzer Prize, for an exposé of a labor racketeer. The newspaper eventually hired him and he has been there ever since, as investigator-in-chief and editorial utility infielder. Most notably, he led the nationwide investigative reporters' foray into Arizona after the murder of the reporter Don Bolles. In 1990, Greene, nearing retirement, seems to stand alone as the last of the unincorporated.

Keeler is most successful, I think, in bringing to life, as if they still existed in the present, the working newsrooms of thirty, forty, and more years ago. He is least successful in the recent era, when he writes as if under an obligation to leave out nobody of importance, all the while trying to keep two or three topics in harness. One sentence, chosen more or less at random, illustrates: "While the staff coped with Greene's ascendancy, and Laventhol and Insolia tried to make their imprint on the paper, the construc-

tion of the new plant went forward."

Back to the original question: Why *Newsday*? Looking between the lines of this story, much that today's heirs might consider to be violative of journalistic purity — the involvement of the newspaper in the politics, the development, even the corruption of growing Long Island — may in fact be a key. Rather than establishing a cordon sanitaire between journalism and its community, as seems to be the case today with a journalism burdened by codes and white-collarism, the early *Newsday* moved in like an ill-mannered guest, kicked off its shoes, helped itself to whatever was in the refrigerator, and stayed. Eventually it became more civilized and more prestigious, but at bottom it may owe its success to those early days when Alicia's raggedy-ass crew, from offices in an old auto dealership, went out and won *Newsday* its right to survive.

OF ISMS AND PRISMS

BY DAVID SHAW

One prepubescent day about thirty-five or forty years ago, I embarrassed myself but learned a valuable lesson when I mispronounced a word in class. The word was "ideologue"; the lesson, administered briskly by my teacher, was: "The beginning of 'ideologue' sounds like 'idiot,' not like 'idea'; just remember: ideologues are generally idiots; they rarely have real ideas."

I thought of my teacher's comment time and again as I read these books — and never more than when I came across references in two of the books to a study and story I was personally involved in.

In 1985, the *Los Angeles Times* conducted a survey of about 3,000 journalists and 3,000 reporters nationwide, asking more than 100 questions about their political views and their attitudes toward their local newspapers.

David Shaw writes about the media for the Los Angeles Times.

The survey was my idea. I helped draft the questions. I wrote the stories based on the results. I don't say this to boast, merely to confirm what so many newspaper readers say — that anytime the press covers a story they know about personally, the press gets it wrong. In this case, the authors of *And That's the Way It Isn't* and *Unreliable Sources* got it wrong.

L. Brent Bozell III and Brent H. Baker, determined to prove that journalists are little more than cheerleaders for liberal causes, devote two pages to statistics from our survey showing that journalists are much more liberal than the general public. But Bozell and Baker don't bother to note that this same survey also showed that most readers don't think journalists allow their liberalism to influence what they write.

Similarly, Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, determined to prove that journalists are little more than lackeys for the conservative military/industrial/political complex, twice cite figures from the *Los Angeles Times* survey that show journalists taking a conservative position on given issues. But Martin and Solomon don't bother to mention that on the vast majority of issues in that survey — abortion, capital punishment, government aid to the poor — journalists took a far more liberal position than the general public.

When I was younger — somewhere between the time I learned to pronounce "ideologue" and the time I learned to pronounce "ayatollah" — I was both a cynic and something of a conspiracy buff. I did not, for example, believe that one man, acting alone, had assassinated President Kennedy, no matter what the Warren Commission said. I was equally skeptical of the official explanations of various suspicious events in the newsrooms where I worked. But the more time I've spent covering the media, the more I've come to realize that a great deal of what appears to outsiders — and indeed to many insiders — to be the product of calculation, conspiracy, collusion, and/or personal, political, social, or financial interest on the part of some editor or publisher has actually come about because of stupidity, vanity, carelessness, inefficiency, insecurity, competitive zeal, personal weakness, institutional idiosyncrasy or even ... coincidence.

Time and again I have been told of

high-ranking editors having stories killed, eviscerated, buried, or banned, either out of cowardice or vested interest, and time and again my reporting has disclosed a far less sinister (if no less damning) explanation for what had happened.

I'm not naive. I realize that the top editors, publishers, and corporate executives of this country's major news media are part of the establishment, with the establishment's interest in preserving the status quo. That means that these media barons sometimes make corrupt journalistic decisions for nonjournalistic reasons. I also know that some working journalists sometimes allow their personal views to unfairly influence what they

UNRELIABLE SOURCES: A GUIDE TO DETECTING BIAS IN NEWS MEDIA

BY MARTIN A. LEE AND NORMAN
SOLOMON. LYLE STUART. 419 PP. \$19.95

AND THAT'S THE WAY IT ISN'T: A REFERENCE GUIDE TO MEDIA BIAS

BY L. BRENT BOZELL III AND BRENT H. BAKER
MEDIA RESEARCH CENTER. 339 PP. \$14.95

PROFILES OF DECEPTION: HOW THE NEWS MEDIA ARE DECEIVING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

BY REED IRVINE AND CLIFF KINCAID
BOOK DISTRIBUTORS, INC. 233 PP. \$17.95

write. I documented just such a case earlier this year when I analyzed major media coverage of abortion over eighteen months and found incontrovertible evidence of a strong bias *against* those opposed to abortion (a point also made by both the Bozell/Baker and Irvine/Kincaid books).

But that bias, I am firmly convinced, is not deliberate, not even conscious; it's just, for the most part, an unwitting cultural assumption that embraces the abortion rights side of the argument. Moreover, the emotional, intensely personal nature of the abortion issue makes it a rare exception. I don't think bias, even subconscious bias, is the unremitting, everyday affair that all three of these books claim, and I don't think any of the books persuasively makes that case. Indeed, all three are essentially (and monotonously) extended one-note themes, the only variation being that two see a liberal bias and one a conservative bias in the media.

Of the three, the easiest to dismiss is the Irvine/Kincaid jeremiad, a compilation of columns and broadcasts issued by

the two conservative gadflies over the past four years. They round up the usual suspects and attack the usual targets: the media misinform the public about South Africa, about the Soviet Union, about Nicaragua, about Afghanistan, about Cuba. The media were unfair to Dan Quayle. The media smear Vietnam veterans. The media are soft on Jesse Jackson. Bob Woodward is a liar. Dan Rather is biased.

But Irvine is a knee-jerk (emphasis on the second syllable) right-wing critic who runs Accuracy in Media and who, for all his fulminations against the media, seems to have little concept of how the media really function. There's no question, for example, that the media are often reluctant to admit their most serious mistakes. But to suggest, as Irvine and Kincaid repeatedly do, that these things consistently happen because of a hidden liberal agenda in the media is preposterous. Most journalists want to bury or ignore their errors because they don't want to be professionally embarrassed, not because they want to advance a political cause.

Like Irvine/Kincaid, Bozell/Baker are conservative ideologues — chairman and executive director, respectively, of the Media Research Center in Alexandria, Virginia. But they are both more systematic and less dogmatic in their analysis than are Irvine/Kincaid. They concede, for example, that there is "rarely a conscious attempt to distort the news." Rather, they argue, most members of the media elite are liberal, "have little contact with conservatives and make little effort to understand the conservative viewpoint."

Fair enough. And Bozell and Baker make a telling point or two about environmental coverage and the cynicism-cum-negativism that often distorts media coverage in general. But Bozell and Baker devote almost half their book to documenting the liberal views and affiliations of the media elite — a given by now, one would think — and they are then unable in the remaining half to mount a convincing argument that these views and affiliations undermine the integrity of the journalistic process. Like Irvine/Kincaid, they pick predictable subjects: the media were tougher on Edwin Meese, the Republican U.S. attorney general, than on Jim Wright, the

Democratic Speaker of the House. The media's coverage of Central America was so "biased" that it has had "an adverse effect on American national security and foreign policy."

But, again, like Irvine and Kincaid, the authors seem not to understand the dynamics of the journalistic process. They don't understand that good news isn't news, for example, or that the bias most reporters have is not political but journalistic: they are biased in favor of a good story, a juicy, controversial story that will land them on page 1 or on the network evening news. Are they happier if someone they disagree with politically is the victim of that story? Probably.

◆

**Reading these books
in tandem
is a bit like listening
to two people's
accounts
of a football game
in which each rooted
for the opposite side**

◆

They're only human. But almost every reporter I've ever known would rather break a really juicy story exposing the wrongdoing of a politician he agrees with than do a routine story making that same politician look good. Does that make us ghouls? Nattering nabobs of negativism? Yes. Is that good? Probably not. But it sure as hell doesn't make us ideologues or cheerleaders for the left. And without some measure of that ghoulish instinct for the jugular, many important stories — stories that serve the general public — would never be pursued or published.

And what of the charge, by Lee and Solomon, that the press is a cheerleader for the conservative establishment? Both men are affiliated with the liberal Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), and — like their conservative counterparts — both seem convinced that reporters are either toadies or cretins.

Yes, Lee and Solomon make several valid points — among them, the overreliance of the media on public relations

handouts and a narrow range of official sources, the absence of any true left in the American media, the dangers of media monopoly, the shameful failure of the media to cover the early stages of the AIDS crisis. But to attribute such shortcomings to the "corporations that own and control the media" and to speak of "the pervasive nature of news censorship" is almost as ludicrous as their charge that the media have been biased against abortion rights advocates.

Unreliable Sources, like the two conservative books under consideration here, often builds conspiratorial mountains out of carefully selected molehills, shrewdly omitting anything that might undermine the authors' thesis. Lee and Solomon describe the dreadfully biased and intellectually bankrupt journalism of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* under Walter Annenberg, for example, but fail to note that in the past eighteen years, under Knight-Ridder and Gene Roberts, the *Inquirer* published series after series exposing corruption in the very establishment, local and national, that Lee and Solomon insist the media are dedicated to protecting.

Reading Bozell/Baker and Lee/Solomon in tandem is a bit like listening to two people's accounts of a football game in which each rooted for the opposite side. Often, given the distorted prism through which each has viewed the game, it sounds as if they went to two different games. Thus, Lee and Solomon argue that the terminology and imagery used by the media in their abortion coverage reveal bias against the abortion-rights side; Bozell/Baker make precisely the opposite argument. Similarly, Bozell/Baker argue that major media coverage is biased in favor of liberal causes and organizations because major media corporations contribute financially to such causes and organizations; Lee/Solomon argue that legal, financial, and social interrelationships between major media companies and other major corporations and governmental agencies have made the media little more than handmaidens to the conservative establishment and the causes and organizations they favor.

On almost every issue that both books discuss, the viewpoints are as different as they are predictable. Bozell and Baker are horrified that — in their view — the

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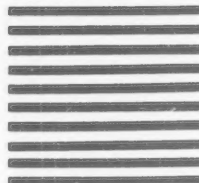
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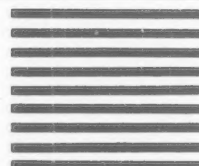
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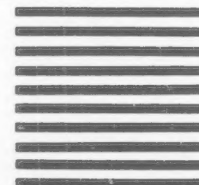
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media gave more credence to the Soviet explanation than to the American explanation for the Soviets' shooting down of Korean Airlines flight 007 in 1983. The media's acceptance of the "outlandish Soviet charges" that the plane was "on a secret spy mission for the United States" is proof of the media's leftward tilt, they say. But Lee and Solomon examined the same coverage, and what did they conclude? "The Reagan administration knew within days of the KAL shoot-down that the Soviets had believed it to be a military aircraft on a spy mission," but even after Seymour Hersh reported this, the media "virtually ignored" it and continued to parrot the administration's propagandistic line.

Amusingly — tellingly — both Bozell/Baker and Lee/Solomon speak of the phenomenon of the "revolving door" — the process by which journalists move between jobs in journalism and jobs in the government. Bozell/Baker count 187 "current or former Big Media reporters, editors, producers, and executives [who] were connected at one time to liberal political groups, but only 57 [with] ... ties to Republicans or conservatives." This is another strong "indication" of the "disproportionate influence" exercised by liberals in the media, they say. But Lee/Solomon cite journalists who formerly worked for the government and who, because they "tend to view the world in ways that conform to the national security establishment" wind up writing and broadcasting stories that faithfully reflect the administration line — most recently, of course, a conservative administration line.

There are elements of truth in this observation, as there are in many of the specifics cited in all these books. But too often the authors of all three books have taken those lumps of truth, jammed them crudely together, and tried to fire them in the kiln of conspiracy. The result, not surprisingly, is more crock than crockery.

Collectively, the media spew out millions of words every day. Some of them are wrong, for a variety of reasons. Some of them are unfair and irresponsible and hurtful. It isn't terribly difficult to isolate some of those words — some of those page 1 (or page 28) stories — and weave a web of partisan conspiracy.

It isn't difficult. But — most of the time — it's wrong. ♦

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SHORT TAKES

THE WIMP THING

Even eleven months [after publication of the *Newsweek* cover story "Fighting the Wimp Factor,"] with most of his battles won, with the nomination of his party in hand, with the polls showing him that the presidency was his and with nobody talking about his being a wimp, even then Bush remained furious. He still would not give one-on-one interviews to *Newsweek* and had given *Time* magazine preferential treatment as extra punishment.

Newsweek wanted a truce. It was doing a book on the campaign and had committed a half dozen full-time people and hundreds of thousands of dollars to the effort. And it needed Bush, especially because it looked like he was going to be the winner. So on September 17, 1988, a meeting was arranged at the

vice-president's residence in Washington, D.C. In attendance were Bush, James Baker, his campaign chairman, and Craig Fuller, his chief of staff, on one side, and Katharine Graham, chairman of the board of the Washington Post Company, which owns *Newsweek*, Rick Smith, the magazine's editor, and Evan Thomas, chief of the Washington bureau, on the other. Though the byline on the wimp article was Margaret Garrad Warner's, she had not used the word "wimp" in her original story. It was inserted by Thomas and the decision to run it on the cover — which was what really had sent Bush "ballistic," to use one of his favorite terms — had been made by Smith.

While the story was progressing through the *Newsweek* editing system, sources at *Newsweek* were informing the Bush campaign how things were proceeding.... And when Bush's aides learned the word "wimp" might be on the cover, [campaign manager Lee] Atwater called *Newsweek* in an attempt to persuade the magazine not to use it.

He argued, he cajoled, he threatened. But it did not work.

The editors pointed out that the word had been around for a long time — it was how Reagan had felt about Bush in the New Hampshire primary in 1980, in fact — and that Garry Trudeau's *Doonesbury* comic strip had already used the word in print. Besides, the article was not intended as a campaign profile, it was an exploration of how Bush would deal with his image problem. In retrospect, the article was tough, but fair. The word was used only two times in the main article (though seven more times in the headlines and accompanying articles), and when introduced into the article it was referred to as a "mean word."

None of that mattered to Bush. All he cared about was that the editors had used *that* word on the cover on the day he announced. And now he wanted their guts for garters....

Fortunately, the magazine had a powerful figure on its side, a person used to standing up to presidents, let alone vice-presidents. Kay Graham was known not

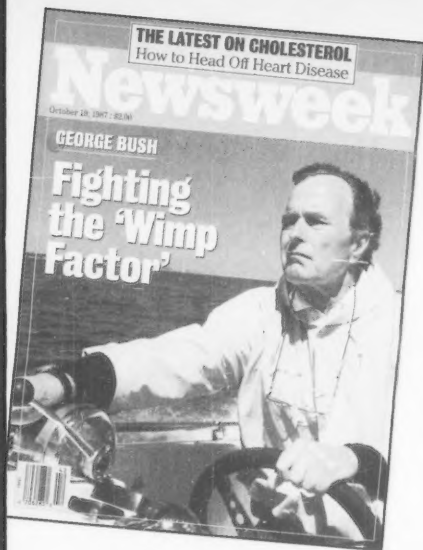
THE ADVENTURES OF DOROTHY

One night in 1926 she was at the Opera in Vienna when news came that revolution had broken out in Poland. It was late, the banks were closed, and the only thing Dorothy could think to do was call on Sigmund Freud, who ordinarily kept the fees he had collected from his American clients in cash in his office. Dorothy had interviewed Freud for the *Public Ledger* and felt no compunction about asking him for a loan, and she set off that night on the train to Warsaw still dressed in her evening gown and slippers. Before the adventure was over she had traveled by train, bus, and peasant cart and then on foot; she straggled into Warsaw at dawn two days later, just in time to discover that Floyd Gibbons, having heard about the ambush of a car full of reporters on the outskirts of the city, had wired her obituary to Berlin.

In these circumstances, and having had such adventures, Dorothy was not particularly interested in a discussion of "femininity" as it related to the effective conduct of journalism. She had no use for "the specious feminism of the women's magazines, which persist in finding cause for jubilation every time a woman becomes, for the first time, an iceman, a road surveyor, or a senator.... This playing up of women is a disservice and an anachronism.... The see-what-the-little-darling-has-done-now attitude ought to be outlawed." Historically, Dorothy argued, women had made notoriously good spies; why should they not also be good foreign correspondents? "Their chief trouble is that they suffer from an inferiority complex and that they sell their services too cheap." She had some advice for women who hoped to enter the field: "Don't accept for an instant the theory that it's a man's job, and don't be flattered by the phrase, 'You write like a man.' That's only a man's badge of approval, and it doesn't mean anything."

FROM **AMERICAN CASSANDRA: THE LIFE OF DOROTHY THOMPSON**
BY PETER KURTH. LITTLE, BROWN. 587 PP. \$24.95





only for her toughness ... but also for her charm. Few people find it easy to stay angry with her face to face.

Bush, however, seemed to be managing quite well. It was 9 A.M. on a Saturday and Bush was wearing a work shirt and an icy expression. "You used that w-

word," Bush said. "That awful word. That dreadful word. That ugly word." He went on for forty-five minutes. He said he was personally offended and that his family had been hurt, his daughter had cried and his whole family had been embarrassed. He turned to Evan Thomas, the Washington bureau chief, and asked: "How many times is that ugly word in the story?"

Thomas wasn't sure. "Ten times?" he replied.

Jim Baker, who wanted the breach repaired, intervened. "No, no, not that many!" he said. "Three or four at the most."

And then, men who would soon negotiate language with the Soviets over arms reduction began negotiating for a non-apology apology that would satisfy Bush.

"They were trying to find some language," the source said, "like how *Newsweek* 'recognized in retrospect it wasn't the best thing to do' or something like that."

The *Newsweek* people wanted to show

Bush they realized he felt badly and that they could sympathize with his feelings. They just didn't want to apologize. By the time the meeting ended, Bush did seem somewhat mollified. "Kay," he said to Mrs. Graham at the end of the meeting, "we'll work this out."

So later, Rick Smith had to fly back to Washington to have lunch with Baker to work out details. Baker still sought an apology and Smith still refused. "In the end, *Newsweek* never actually apologized, but Baker sort of put words in our mouth to the president [that is, Bush]," the source said. "He told him, 'Well, they concede this and that,' and, in effect, Baker apologized on *Newsweek's* behalf." Bush said it was now O.K. for his people to cooperate with the magazine. But he would often talk about that Saturday meeting and how he "really put the editors in their place."

FROM **ROADSHOW: IN AMERICA ANYONE CAN BECOME PRESIDENT. IT'S ONE OF THE RISKS WE TAKE**

BY ROGER SIMON, FARRAR STRAUS & GIROUX. 356 PP. \$19.95

MILNE OF FLEET STREET

Milne says he was sick with indignation that his father had written [to Alfred Harmsworth, Baron Northcliffe of Fleet Street, a former pupil]. Well, it was too late now. The appointment was made. He had to keep it. He was shown into the Great Man's room and told, kindly, that Harmsworth was going to send him along to two of his editors. "I have been careful," Harmsworth said, "not to let them know that your father is one of my oldest and greatest friends" (Alan could hear his mother sniff, if not snort) "because I want you to make your own way. So now it's up to you." Milne was taken in to Arthur Mee.... "He told me that, if I cared to send in contributions to *The Daily Mail* I could address them to him personally. I was in no mood to realize that this was a valuable concession; I felt that it just left me where I was before. We passed on to the next editor. I have forgotten his name, but still have a memory of shirt-sleeves and a half-smoked cigar. He was that sort of editor, and he was responsible for some twenty 'comics,' boy's papers and what not. Humorous writers, he assured me with his feet up, were in demand, but I must realize that his public did not want anything subtle or refined. 'Funny stories about policemen, y'know what I mean, umbrellas, knockabout, that sort of thing.' I assured him that I knew what he meant. I left the building. I walked across the road to Temple Chambers. Telling myself that I mustn't let Father think that his help was in vain, I sat grimly down and began to write a funny story about a policeman; not subtle, not refined. Knockabout. I wrote four hundred words. I think I can say truthfully that those are the only words I have ever written which I did not write for my own pleasure. At the four hundredth word, I stopped, read them through, and with a sigh of happiness tore them into pieces. I was back on my own again; making, as Harmsworth said, my own way."

FROM **A. A. MILNE: THE MAN BEHIND WINNIE-THE-POOH**
BY ANN THWAITE. RANDOM HOUSE. 554 PP. \$29.95



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LETTERS

STILL TUNED TO NPR

◆ As the first director of programming at National Public Radio, I would like to add another perspective to Bruce Porter's article "Has Success Spoiled NPR?" (CJR, September/October).

It is unfair to characterize the original staff as "part-timers and near amateurs." The full-time staff came to NPR with experience at UPI, CBS, NBC, and *The New York Times*, and a few from public radio stations. We wanted to demonstrate that radio is a powerful, personal, imaginative medium and to take a broader, more inclusive editorial approach with a harder, more questioning attitude than the commercial network news on the hour.

We did not regard NPR as "an experimental alternative to commercial broadcasting." We ceded nothing to commercial broadcasting. That's why *All Things Considered* starts at 5:00 P.M. Although we had little money, we were willing to take risks to find new ways to tell stories, often using location sound to make them more engaging. We wanted to set new standards for broadcast journalism. It's worth noting that *All Things Considered* won a Peabody for programming in its first eighteen months on the air.

WILLIAM H. SIEMERING
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
SOUND PRINT
BALTIMORE, MD

Bruce Porter replies: *My characterizing the early staff as "part timers and near amateurs" reflected the assessment of staff members who had worked at NPR during the early days themselves and who were presumably referring to their own qualifications.*

◆ Bruce Porter articulated what *All Things Considered* has lacked in recent years: the sense of serendipitous fun that once prevailed, despite the serious nature of much of the news. It can still be found on the NPR news program he neglected to discuss, *Week-end Edition*, especially the Saturday show with Scott Simon, a terrific interviewer and a rollicking host.

FENWICK ANDERSON
NEW HAVEN, CONN.

To be considered for publication in the March/April issue, letters should be received by January 21. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

'BACKYARD' IN BANGOR

◆ John Diamond left out an important point in his examination of our newsroom policy ("Where Karen Wood Was Killed," CJR, November/December). Following the shooting of Karen Wood by a deer hunter, the first few stories that appeared in the *Bangor Daily News* (before the rest of the country carried the story) identified the location of the shooting as "wooded property behind her home."

What is important is the fact that the reporter who covered the hunting accident from the beginning used the term "wooded property behind her home." She did so on her own, without benefit of any "newsroom policy" or coaching from any *Bangor Daily News* editors.

Later, as the tragedy drew national media attention, the term "shot in her own backyard" gained widespread currency in the national media coverage. Soon our own local and regional media fell into lockstep: from that point on every reference without exception was "shot in her own backyard."

The herd mentality — the American media's most predictable trait — had once again taken control. After receiving a number of telephone calls from people in other states who had read of the tragedy and were shocked that this woman "was shot on her own lawn," it became clear to me that the "backyard" reference was misleading readers following this controversial issue from afar.

As managing editor, I felt that in the name of accuracy and independent journalism we should stick with our original description of the shooting location, which is more accurate.

My critics say that my judgment on this matter is clouded or suspect because I am a hunter. Perhaps this is so. However, I believe that were I not a hunter, my "backyard" memo to the staff would have been largely ignored by media critics.

V. PAUL REYNOLDS
MANAGING EDITOR
THE BANGOR DAILY NEWS
BANGOR, ME.

WHITE GOLD

◆ Re: the caption to the photo showing "Who's Who at CNN's Special Assignment Unit" ("CNN Goes for the Gold," CJR, September/October), Pamela Hill and CNN should be ashamed of themselves for not selecting a single African-American, Asian-American, or Native-American for its recently formed investigative unit. According to the text, Hill says that she is doing her best, but that finding capable minority minority-group journalists is difficult, given the fact that the dominant culture of investigative reporting is white and male. How can she offer such an excuse when her staff includes two baby-

faced former reporters-in-training at *The New York Times*? I say she simply didn't try hard enough to create a more racially mixed staff.

KATTI GRAY
HAUPPAUGE, N.Y.

ASBESTOS DEBATE

◆ The Dart you tossed at *The New York Times* and science writer William K. Stevens for his "coverage of scientific debate on the risks of asbestos in schools and other public buildings" (CJR September/October) is an amalgam of misinformation, distortion, and innuendo that could have been avoided had you called us for our side of the story.

You imply that Stevens has downplayed the health hazards of asbestos by giving undue weight to the views of a few scientists who are paid consultants of the asbestos industry without revealing the financial conflicts of interest that might bias the judgment of those scientists.

But we believe that any fair-minded reader of the four stories you criticize would find them accurate and well-balanced, with ample quotes from experts on both sides of the asbestos debate. The journalistic need to report the industry ties that you describe seems questionable.

The first scientist whom you tar as a "paid consultant" of the asbestos industry, Brooke T. Mossman, a recognized asbestos expert at the University of Vermont, says that she had accepted pay occasionally for lectures to lawyers on both sides of the issue, representing either plaintiffs or defendants in asbestos injury cases. In 1987 she was also paid to present her views to the Environmental Protection Agency by a lawyer for Owens-Corning Fiberglass, a former asbestos manufacturer. In 1988 she advised Owens-Corning on laboratory techniques for testing the toxicity of glass fibers designed to replace asbestos. And in 1990 she had lunch with a lawyer for United States Gypsum Company, but told the lawyer she would not appear as an expert witness for the company.

The other scientist you cite as an industry consultant, J. Bernard L. Gee, of Yale University, acknowledges that he has delivered lectures for pay to groups of lawyers for the industry and has, in some past years, derived 30 to 40 percent of his income from evaluating medical records for asbestos injury cases or testifying in court. Most of that work was for industry defendants but some of it was for injured plaintiffs.

You also chide Stevens for failing to mention that a Harvard symposium on asbestos had partial industry participation and financial sponsorship. But you fail to note that Harvard retained the sole discretion to invite participants, organize the symposium, and publish the proceedings. Those duties were

The New York Times Fellowship for Journalists at Columbia University School of Law

The New York Times Law School Fellowship offers a print journalist the opportunity to learn about the legal system during a year of study at one of the nation's leading law schools. The Fellowship is financed by a grant of \$25,000 from The New York Times Company Foundation.

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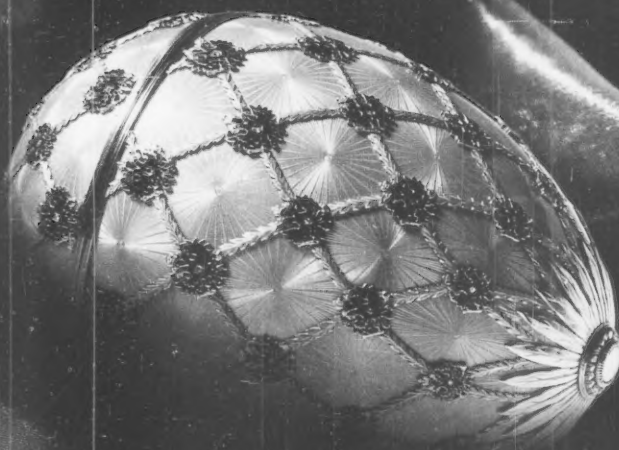
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The New York Times



FABERGÉ
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performed by four experts on health issues and risk assessment who had never worked on asbestos and appear wholly objective on the issue.

You also falsely imply that *The New England Journal of Medicine*, which published an article by Mossman and Gee, subsequently changed its editorial policies because of criticisms that the two scientists had a conflict of interest. But Dr. Arnold S. Relman, the journal's editor-in-chief, tells us the charges of conflict of interest against Mossman and Gee are "without foundation" and that the policy change you refer to had nothing to do with them or their article.

The basic question you raise is legitimate. It is often a tough call to decide when to cite a scientist's affiliations and sources of income to warn the reader of possible bias. Stevens chose not to do so in these asbestos stories because it would take additional reporting time to learn everyone's affiliations on both sides of the debate and would consume additional news space to describe them, diminishing the space available for scientific substance.

You are free to disagree with that judgment. But if you are going to insist that affiliations be cited, you must be scrupulously evenhanded, which you were not. How can you selectively chastise Stevens for failing to

note the industry ties of two scientists and one symposium on one side of the debate without even raising the question of whether he should have mentioned the union connections of another scientist and another symposium on the other side of the debate?

PHILIP M. BOFFEY
SCIENCE AND HEALTH EDITOR
THE NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK, N.Y.

The editors reply: *The Dart focused on the unreported industry ties of two particular*

scientists — Mossman and Gee — because they were the only two scientists repeatedly quoted in the four Times pieces cited. As for the "wholly objective" experts who arranged the so-called Harvard Symposium, according to the April 1990 issue of *Asbestos Issues*, a state court judge recently excluded all reference to the symposium's findings because it had been "bought and paid for" by the asbestos companies. The article went on to note that the university has also disclaimed the symposium that bears its name. The parenthetical reference to *The New England Journal of Medicine's* new policy (of accepting articles only from authors who have no financial interest in the subject) was not intended to suggest that the change represented a direct response to criticism of its publication of Mossman and Gee's work, but simply to applaud the policy and encourage, at the very least, disclosure of such financial interest in other science reporting, including that of *The New York Times*.

NADER'S 'LOONY' CHARGES

◆ To A. M. Rosenthal, former executive editor of *The New York Times*, Ralph Nader's criticisms of the *Times's* consumer coverage

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("Ralph Nader: News Creator," *CJR*, May/June) are "loony," and prove only that Nader equates consumer coverage with coverage of himself. The fact is that the *Times* never wanted stories critical of consumer treatment by major corporations.

I served as the *Times*'s consumer reporter for six years — 1974 to 1980 — until I was demoted to Long Island reporter after I failed to produce enough service stories or, as I called them, "news-you-can-use" stories. These are the shopping hints, the how-to-get-a-better-bargain stories. They have their place, and whenever I did one I received compliments from my editors. But I was always far more interested in investigative stories, in seeing, for example, whether skyrocketing insurance rates for malpractice, autos, and so on were truly justified. I did a series on these issues, noting along the way the revolving door between the regulators and the regulated, and the political ties of the powerful lawyers who represented the industry.

These stories, and others like them, never earned me any compliments. In fact, I was called on the carpet for describing one such lawyer as "politically connected."

At the time, I could not understand what was happening because I had been invited to become the *Times*'s consumer reporter after

six happy years of doing that job at *Newsday*. Since my work at *Newsday* had been primarily investigative, and since I had won a Polk Award for it, I assumed my new bosses knew what to expect from me. I realized later that they truly had no interest in my work. By hiring me they had answered the criticism that the *Times* had been neglecting consumer coverage.

Back out on Long Island, I continued to do the kind of work that excited me, and was fortunate to be there for the Long Island Lighting Company's fiasco with the Shoreham nuclear plant. I did stories on the spectacular cost overruns, talking to managers and workers about construction errors and work schedules that had pipe fitters working less than half the time. I wrote about the unlikely possibility that the area around the site could be safely evacuated. Citizen and environmental groups mounted effective opposition to LILCO, whose public relations department began to show a bunker mentality. I soon heard from other reporters that their bosses were getting complaints from top LILCO management that the reporters on the scene were biased.

In mid-1982 I was assigned to do a "status report" on LILCO. I dug around, looked at the finances of the Shoreham situation, and wrote a story which said that Shoreham

might drive LILCO into bankruptcy. The story never ran. I was accused of bias, and refused any opportunity to "correct" the story with my editor. I was told, furthermore, that to print my story might affect LILCO's financial well-being.

The bottom line for me was that I was informed LILCO was no longer on my beat.

About a year later, I resigned from the *Times*.

The sad thing is that LILCO won in the end. It silenced reporters like me. There was no one around who could effectively challenge LILCO in print when New York state bailed out LILCO and saddled the consumers of Long Island with Shoreham's cost. There was no one around to point out that LILCO's management had stubbornly continued to build Shoreham as a nuclear plant, no matter what its cost, rather than to consider alternatives suggested along the way, such as turning it into a coal plant or a liquified coal plant. A nonregulated company would either have modified its plans or gone bankrupt. In the end, LILCO's status as a regulated utility — guaranteed a rate of return — allowed it to profit from its stubborn mismanagement.

No, Ralph Nader's comments about *The New York Times* were not "loony."

FRANCES CERRA
HUNTINGTON, N.Y.

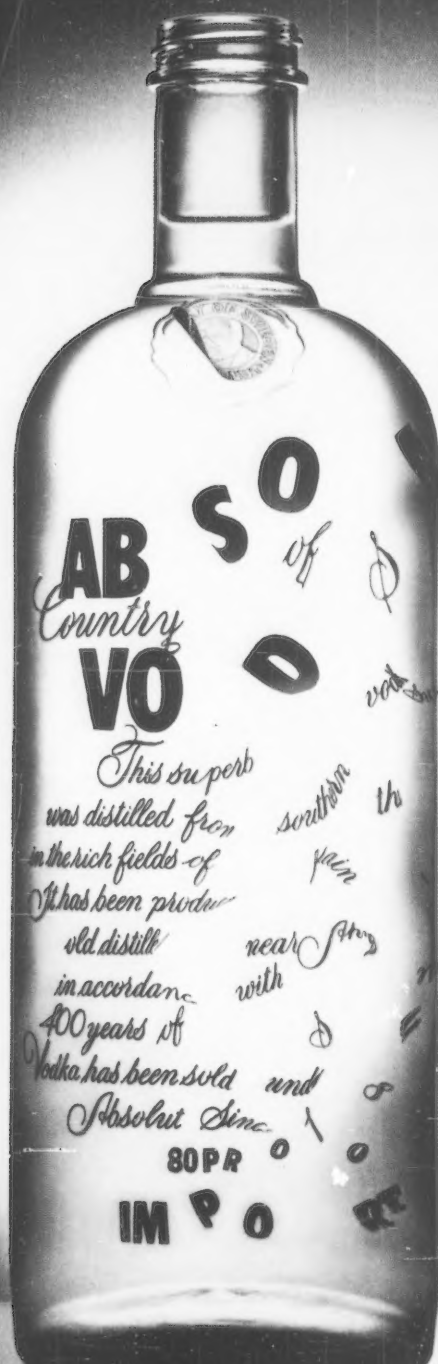
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Citizens "mad as hell" over complaisant, enept Congress

Business Focus (Lake of the Ozark, Mo.) 10/29/90

Annual Auction of Retired Teachers

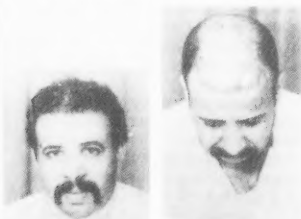
Old Town-Orono (Me.) Times 10/11/90

Nude pub lawyer promises neighborly approach

The Review (Clackamas County, Oreg.) 4/13/89

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Before

After

China Daily 9/25/90

Man-eating surgeon found on Elk River beach

The Mariner (Elkton, Md.) 9/7/90

Jaycee Legislature Suggests Georgia Legalize Sodomy and Beer on Sunday

The Athens (Ga.) Observer 10/11/90

FBI wanted man killed in Shelton

The Bridgeport (Conn.) Post 10/30/90

Dead Abby

Milwaukee Sentinel 8/6/90

KELLY— Marie A. (nee Nissen), age 76, of Weehawken. Beloved mother of Kathleen and Kevin Kelly. Widow of the late Edward J. Kelly. Long-suffering Tenant of Gertrude Zeichner.

The Hudson Dispatch (Union City, N.J.) 7/11/89



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